OLD!

THE ESSENTIAL GUIDE TO CLASSIC GAMES

Retro GAMER™



AMSTRAD | COMMODORE | SEGA | NINTENDO | ATARI | SINCLAIR | NEO-GEO | SONY | COIN-OP | MOBILE

GOING HEAD OVER HEELS

JON RITMAN LOOKS BACK AT HIS ICONIC 8-BIT ISOMETRIC MASTERPIECE



ALSO INSIDE

ZZOOM | SCOOBY-DOO | NINTENDO 64
DARIUSBURST CHRONICLE SAVIOURS
REALM OF THE TROLLS



STREET FIGHTER II

25 YEARS OF FIREBALLS: EXCLUSIVE ACCESS, EVERY GAME, THE BEST AND WORST PORTS

25 GREATEST NEO-GEO GAMES

INSIDE THIS HARD-HITTING ISSUE:

TALK TO... RON GILBERT

THE PAST AND FUTURE OF GRAPHIC ADVENTURES REVEALED INSIDE

THE LEGACY OF THE MAC

THE RISE AND FALL AND RISE OF THE APPLE MACINTOSH

THE HISTORY OF HUNCHBACK

ALL YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT THE CLASSIC PLATFORMER SERIES

HOW CODEMASTERS MADE ITS SUPERB TOP-DOWN SEQUEL

ip IMAGINE PUBLISHING
DigitalEdition
GreatDigitalMags.com
ISSUE 151





THE RETROBATES

FAVOURITE CHARACTER FROM THE STREET FIGHTER II GAMES



DARRAN JONES

I'm a huge fan of Zangief, and not just because continuously spinning a joystick is stupidly easy to do.

Expertise:
Juggling a gorgeous wife, two beautiful girls and an award-winning magazine.

Currently playing:
Secret Of Mana

Favourite game of all time:
Strider



NICK THORPE

I'm a Ryu player – very vanilla, I know, but at least I didn't have to find a new character for *Street Fighter III*!

Expertise:
Owning six Master Systems (I sold one)

Currently playing:
SNK Gals Fighters

Favourite game of all time:
Sonic The Hedgehog



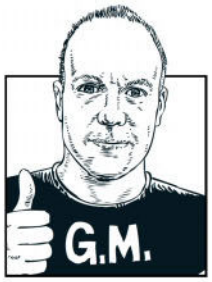
PAUL DRURY

With that Spinning Bird Kick and thighs to die for, it has to be Chun-Li.

Expertise:
The Walter Day Songbook

Currently playing:
Hunchback

Favourite game of all time:
Sheep In Space



GRAEME MASON

Blanka, only because his clones appear in my favourite Mega Drive game, *Streets Of Rage 2*.

Expertise:
Adjusting the tape azimuth with a screwdriver

Currently playing:
Fallout 4

Favourite game of all time:
Resident Evil 4



DAVID CROOKES

Guile's a great challenge to master and he has cool hair - which Capcom says is styled with special-order army spray.

Expertise:
Amstrad, Lynx, adventures, Dizzy, and PlayStation (but is it retro? Debate!)

Currently playing:
Day Of The Tentacle

Favourite game of all time:
Broken Sword



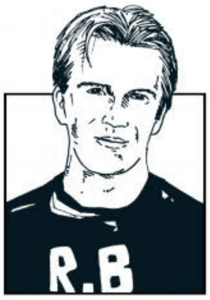
JASON KELK

I've never really got into the *Street Fighter* series, but will pick Chun-Li for arbitrary reasons that aren't down to me fancying her or anything.

Expertise:
Being a homebrew hero

Currently playing:
Moon Patrol (Atari 8-bit)

Favourite game of all time:
Io



RICHARD BURTON

I liked Vega as I wasn't a fan of *SFII* and it meant losing quickly! He was flamboyant and exciting yet lightweight with nothing much to offer - not unlike the crowdfunded Spectrum of the same name.

Expertise:
Time travel

Currently playing:
Horace In The Mystic Woods

Favourite game of all time:
Manic Miner



PAUL DAVIES

It's always been Ryu though I immediately loved Cammy's character design.

Expertise:
Repeatedly banging my head against a brick wall

Currently playing:
Destiny: The Taken King

Favourite game of all time:
Ghouls 'N Ghosts



MARTYN CARROLL

Dhalsim! Crazy fool can't fight but he's got the wildest moves.

Expertise:
Sinclair stuff

Currently playing:
The Vanishing Of Ethan Carter

Favourite game of all time:
Jet Set Willy

LOADING...

I can still remember the first time I saw *Street Fighter II* in my local Poole arcade. It looked astonishing, being on a huge 28-inch monitor and there were a queue of people actually waiting to play it. Everyone dutifully waited in line while we all got resoundingly beat by a guy playing Ken. I never got to learn his name, but I did gain a healthy respect for how good people could get at games.

There were certainly great fighting games before *Street Fighter II* but nothing could touch Capcom's game and it set a new standard that all later fighters desperately tried to follow. Insane special moves, varied characters with different styles, clever combos, incredible animation and sound, deceptively deep gameplay, *Street Fighter II* had all this and more, which is astonishing, particularly when you consider how distinctively average its predecessor was.

The buzz was equally huge once the game was ported to home systems, although all the home computers failed to replicate the excitement and precision of the arcade original, meaning the SNES version was *the* version to own. Yes it was expensive, but £60 was a small price to pay for a seemingly arcade-perfect conversion.

Enjoy the magazine!



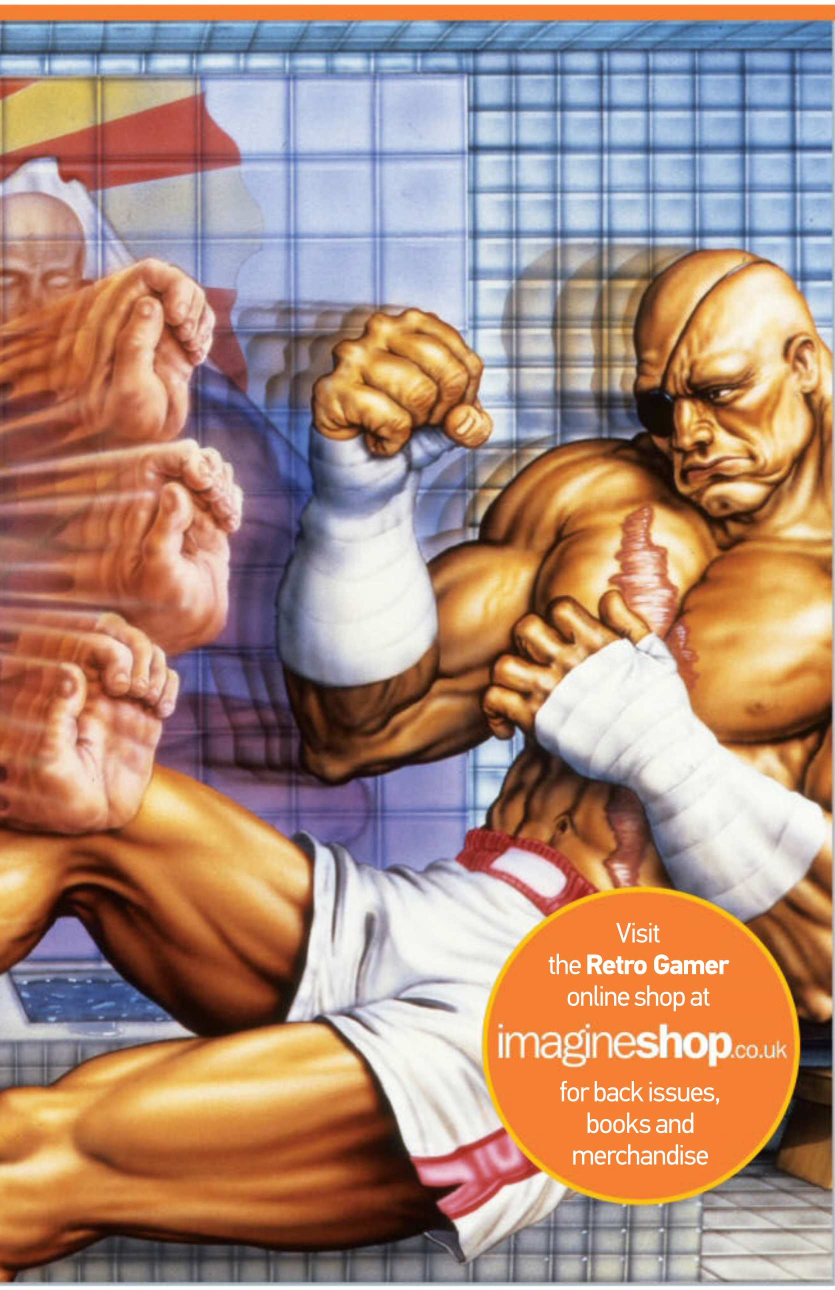


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>> Load 151 Breathing new life into classic games

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» Who wouldn't want to own something like this?

PI IN THE SKY?

How Marcel Haan is going to resurrect the Starforce Pi

CONTENTS

On paper, the Starforce Pi sounds like a very desirable machine for retro gamers. With a design sensibility harking back to the legendary Eighties tabletops from the likes of Grandstand and Tomy, it features an arcade joystick, stereo sound and a magnified screen set back in the chunkily satisfying casing that will definitely bring on a wave of nostalgia for old-school gamers. Unfortunately, you won't find the device available for purchase anywhere at the moment, but this is something which creator Marcel Haan is hoping to rectify in the near future.

Originally set to retail at €199, a recent Kickstarter campaign failed to raise the necessary funds for a consumer release, reaching just over a quarter of the campaign's €190,000 goal. Marcel thinks that the reason may have been that potential buyers may have been slow to warm up to the idea of the device, but is optimistic about trying a new campaign next year. The initial plan was to utilise the low-cost Raspberry Pi computer as the machine's CPU in order to concentrate on overall build quality. With the release of an even more inexpensive model, the Raspberry Pi 0, Marcel is now looking at bringing the potential production costs of his tabletop arcade machine down even further.

"Our production plan was centred on developing injection moulding tools for the arcade case," says Marcel, "and due to the complexity and size of the case this would cost around €40,000 which was very expensive. Now we are focusing on a smaller volume, which removes this kind of development investment, but increases the per-unit case price, which the Raspberry Pi 0 could offset. We'll also look into offering the system as a kit, and explore the possibility of crowd-sourcing the assembly and testing."

"Having a campaign so close to Christmas brings an inherent risk with it, and the rather ambitious funding goal was finally too much to ask for at this stage," Marcel admits. "However, we did manage to receive a significant proportion of our goal, nearly 49,000 Euro from 171 backers, and most of them wanted the upgraded €239 version! We've learnt a lot from this campaign, and we'll use this valuable information in outlining our next one."

We asked Marcel if he thought that knowledge of the low cost of the Raspberry Pi may have affected backer interest, despite it being a very capable machine with a level of hardware found in £600 laptops just a few years back. "If you superficially glance at the Starforce Pi, see the price, and only read there's a Raspberry Pi in there, absolutely," he agrees. "Why pay €199 for something that's only running a €22 board – where's the rest of the money going? Thankfully, a lot of people really came around, but it's still quite an expensive device and easily dismissed by those who only see it as a cheap Raspberry Pi in a case."

Marcel is also keen to reach the best compromise between cost and quality in terms of video fidelity, although if desired the machine can also be hooked up to an HDTV. "We're using a budget 4.2" TFT [LCD] screen with 240p resolution set to 4:3 ratio (16:9 natively), which looks pretty good," he

WHAT'S A REASONABLE PRICE FOR THE STARFORCE PI?

■ I'd go with the €100 option as the upper scale. Possibly optimistic for what it is, but I have to consider it in the context of other electronic games. **ANTIRIAD2097**

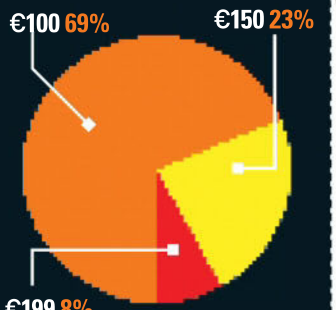
■ £50. It is using a free OS. **DPRINNY**

■ Just hope this happens, I love MAME machines. Putting one in a small tabletop type case would be great. **PSJ3809**

■ €199 seems reasonable to me for a self-funded/crowdfunded product like this. **OUTDATED_GAMER**

■ I also chose the €150 mark here, regardless of the engine running the system, the level of production logistics being done with this machine is exceptional. **GREYFOX**

■ For a small production run, €199 doesn't seem unreasonable for me so long as the build quality is top notch. **MATT_B**

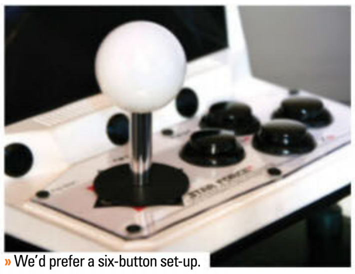




» A few examples of what the finished product could look like.



» *Metal Slug* could look fantastic.



» We'd prefer a six-button set-up.



» There are lots of handy ports.

tells us. "However, if you want OLED displays or 4:3 native ratio displays, your screen quickly enters the €50-60 realm, and that's just too expensive. We mitigate the quality difference by placing the screen behind a tinted, magnified window which helps a lot."

Marcel also hints at the possibility of a deluxe version of the Starforce Pi to run games from more modern, hardware-intensive systems alongside older arcade titles. "Smooth and fast emulation for anything up to the Neo-Geo works well on either version of the RasPi, so *Golden Axe*, *King Of Fighters* and *Metal Slug* will run great! But for systems like the Nintendo 64, Sega 32X, and certain 3D PlayStation games, a Raspberry Pi 2 would be more appropriate."

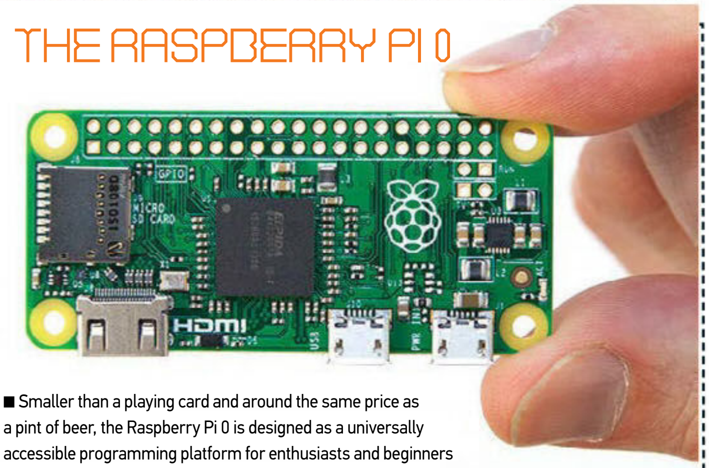
Emulation is supported by preloading game ROMs using the Raspberry Pi's built-in micro SD interface or from a USB stick, and Marcel is hoping that official support from the likes of Sega and Capcom may be a possibility in at some point. "That would be the dream, but it's very unlikely for now," he admits. "We'd need to make a significant impact for them to take notice, and we're not quite there yet. But I want to keep it as a long-term goal."

The Raspberry Pi's two USB ports will also allow scope for upgrading the systems four-button arcade control layout for those wanting to play the likes of *Street Fighter 2*, and could even allow multiplayer support. "It's a rather small device, and cramming six 24mm arcade buttons simply wasn't possible in the prototype," says Marcel. "We'd either have to make our own buttons, or increase the case size, both of which would increase cost. However, the two USB inputs will allow people to add their own peripherals, including classic controllers with more buttons."

"Multiplayer is achievable in the sense of adding an extra game controller to your Starforce Pi machines and playing with a friend on the same device connected to the TV. But connecting two Starforce Pi machines together is something that requires a bit more development. The emulation suite developers have tentatively told us that there is no technical reason why this shouldn't be possible, though, so we're optimistic!"

For more information on the Starforce Pi see starforcepi.com. *

THE RASPBERRY PI 0



■ Smaller than a playing card and around the same price as a pint of beer, the Raspberry Pi 0 is designed as a universally accessible programming platform for enthusiasts and beginners alike. With a 1Mhz CPU, 512MB of RAM, two micro USB ports, a micro SD cart slot and a Mini HDMI slot, it packs a level of hardware found in top-selling laptops of just a decade ago, and it has more RAM than the first generation of iPhones. The Cambridge-based Raspberry Pi Foundation has, so far, sold five million units of the older Raspberry Pi models since its launch in 2012 at around $20-35 US per unit. It is hoping the new budget version will find the same level of popularity and remove the barrier of cost for those who want to get their first experience of programming.



CASTLEVANIA RONDO OF BLOOD (PC ENGINE)

"This was an expensive addition to my extensive *Castlevania* collection, but I'm super happy to have it as it's a great game with great music."

PAID: £110

VIRTUAL BOY COLLECTION

"I cherish this system as it's the first one I really started collecting seriously for. When I stumbled upon it on eBay I got so intrigued, I just couldn't get enough of it."

PAID: £650 in total

DONKEY KONG GAME & WATCH

"The first thing I ever played was an orange Game & Watch like this, when I was very young. I loved it and it holds a special place in my heart. I have three boxed ones today!"

PAID: £70

Collector's corner

Readers take us through the retro keyhole

BIO

NAME: Heidi

ESTIMATED VALUE: £350,000

FAVOURITE CONSOLES: Famicom/PC Engine/Super Famicom/Neo-Geo

FAVOURITE GAME: "I hate getting that question! There are too many great games out there!"

Our collector this month hails from Sweden and had to wait until the age of 18 before obtaining her first console. "It was a PlayStation 2," begins Heidi, "and I convinced my Dad to buy it for me as I told him it was a very particular DVD player that I needed." Sneaky, but we like her style. "He regrets it now, because I started hoarding games for it, then the Xbox, and then older games!" However, Heidi was a gamer long before this time, often using her skills to help out friends or relatives stuck in a game. "My cousin used to call me over whenever she was stuck on a boss in *Super Mario Bros. 2*, and I always played games at friends' houses, and loved it."

One of the notable aspects of Heidi's collection is its breadth of eras and formats. Inside her beautiful dedicated gaming room sits ZX Spectrums, Commodore 64s and Amigas, an Atari 2600 and Jaguar, as well as virtually every Nintendo console. "Sweden has always had a big love for Nintendo since we got it a year before the rest of the Europe," explains Heidi, "and we have a lot of Nintendo collectors. I love Sega equally though!" Similar to the UK, retro gaming and collecting is very popular in Sweden today. "We have at least five different retro gaming shows each year in different cities, and there's lots of vendors selling retro games here in Sweden now. They're usually much pricier than the internet, though, but I do try to support them by buying something every time I visit one. I use the internet mostly, because I import a lot of Japanese and NTSC games."

Having already acquired an impressive collection, we ask Heidi what's next. "I'm always open to anything new," she smiles, "but I don't have a plan, I just bump into things by accident and then usually buy them! But otherwise I just buy whatever looks cool or has a name that intrigues me. I never look up reviews or gameplay before buying something – I prefer experiencing it the way as if I would have back in the Eighties, before the internet was a thing. Sometimes it's a hit, sometimes it's a miss!" *



TV GAME 100 PLUS 2

"When I was in Japan I got addicted to the UFO catchers and this one caught my eye because it had this tiny Famicom-like controller in it. There's a great *Tetris* clone called *Falling Blocks* on it."

PAID: So many coins!



JEWEL IN THE CROWN

THAT PIECE YOU CAN'T BE WITHOUT

SEALED COPY OF ZELDA: A LINK TO THE PAST (SUPER NINTENDO)

■ "My only factory-sealed game. What's interesting, for me, is its emotional value since a good friend gave it to me some ten years ago. I don't see him often anymore and it reminds me of him. Although, personally, I don't like the game, I would never sell it."

PAID: £0





BLAST CITY WITH MVS BOARD CABINET

"My arcade cabinets are very dear to me, and they are perfect additions to my room. This was my second purchase and has a Neo-Geo four-slot MVS board in it, a perfect addition to my AES."

PAID: £750



» Fancy getting into a new system? The Video Game Market is a perfect place to start.

ANY OLD GAMES FOR SALE?

RetroCollect's Adam Buchanan on this year's Video Game Market

The Video Game Market event is approaching its third year, and organiser Adam Buchanan hopes it will be the best yet. Designed as a venue to sell and trade retro gear and games, the event has grown in popularity and it gives retro gamers a great opportunity to gain access to thousands of new items. We caught up with Adam to uncover plans for this year's event.

What have you learned from the last event?
After the overwhelming success of the last Video Game Market, the main learning we took away from it was to keep things the same. We had a fantastic balance of sellers offering all the classics, to those with obscure releases and rarities and just about everything else you could imagine in between – all of which we wanted to keep intact.

Are you focussing on retro gaming or will there be any non-gaming items on sale?
While the focus is on retro gaming again, there will once again be a few additional traders offering artwork, sweets, and T-shirts for those wanting a little something extra.

What era of gaming currently seems to be the most popular?
Without a doubt the 16-bit generation takes centre stage at every Video Game Market. As a large population of the buyers at these events are now hitting that nostalgic age (eager to pick up where they left off on the Mega Drive and SNES), there are countless titles from this era exchanging hands on the day.

Why do you think these events, such as the Video Game Market, are so popular?
With the rise of eBay and traders at car boot sales, the days of finding retro games cheap have sadly long passed away. As the Video Game Market costs just a mere £2 to enter, the focus is back on giving everyone an equal chance to finally find that elusive title or piece of gaming hardware that they've missed, all under one pixelicious roof.

Are you doing anything different for this year's Video Game Market?
With the move to a much larger venue we wanted to ensure that everyone within the retro gaming community could grab one of the many bargains on the day. This is turn has seen us secure 600-plus free car park spaces outside the venue, along with a free return Video Game Market shuttle bus running between Doncaster Dome and the train and bus stations nearby.

The Video Game Market runs from 3-5 March at the Doncaster Dome in Doncaster, South Yorkshire. You can find out more at events.retrocollect.com or on Facebook at: facebook.com/TheVideoGameMarket.



» Adam has seen a lot of interest in both the Mega Drive and SNES at past shows.



Here's my bio… Paul Davies
In 1992 I started out on *Mean Machines Sega* and *Nintendo Magazine System*. In 1995 I became editor of *C&VG*. I led the *C&VG* website from 1998 until Christmas 2000, then I left journalism to be concept design manager at Criterion Games. I returned to journalism in 2002 and from 2005 I've been running my own company, Unlikely Hero.

Playback

Since I may be old enough to be your granddad, shaking off decades of gaming memories embedded into my mind and fingers would be impossible. So, I have questions more than answers this month.

In the same way that I got into Deep Purple and Black Sabbath during my teens, I know that there are hundreds of thousands of guys enjoying games from the Eighties, Nineties and early-Noughties for the first time. A decade or so ago can seem like centuries when you've barely been alive for the same amount of years. Part of my reason for looking back was because the heroes of my youth were pointing in that direction as the origins of their own existence. Part of it was also because I'd seen various logos embroidered onto enough denim jackets for it to be a sure sign of something awesome… well, usually it was awesome.

My old turntable, transistor amplifier with crackling volume knob pushing tiny box speakers, was not too far removed from what kids in the Seventies had been using. I was experiencing, more or less, music in the same way that they had done; the same sounds going into my ears, rattling bedroom shelves.

But despite my pretentions of being an authentic rock 'n roller, complete with a newly embroidered and patched denim jacket, what I was hearing the whole time wasn't material as it was recorded. It was degraded via the transfer process from studio tape to lacquer master disc, then mass produced onto cheap vinyl. It then had to survive through my cheap/average stylus and stringy wired set-up.

Now, all this suggests that the best way to enjoy – or sense an affinity with – the gaming experience of the Eighties and Nineties would be to invest in an old portable TV (ideally with SCART), and load up with as many cassettes and cartridges as your budget and the fruits of car boot sales will allow. You are guaranteed an amazing journey; the same one that I had at the dawn of the microwave oven.

But, you see, I used to have this old C90 cassette that a guy accidentally dropped at the Donington Monsters Of Rock in 1986 and I decided to check out on the Aiwa 'Walkman' that was, err, in the same bag as the cassette… anyway, the cassette had some Steve Vai and Santana on there. This device also had a basic equalizer and could play metal tapes. Music sounded incredible.

So from there I wanted to hear all my old stuff sounding better. I saved for better speakers, bugged my Dad to hand over his superior turntable and amplifier (he wasn't using them much). I'm sure I asked for a cool new Walkman for Christmas or whenever. This new journey was like reliving my life in better trainers, with Nikki Sixx hair, no acne and who needs a girlfriend anyway when there's this?

This isn't a question about remasters along the lines of *The Last Of Us*. I'm just curious to know if retro gaming means shitty old TV or the best monitor you can find; mono speaker or subwoofered, floor-shaking, stupendous? What's the true connoisseur's way to revel in the wondrous material that what was always there?

I honestly don't know. That's why I'm asking. *



> "I wanted to hear all my old stuff sounding better"

What do you think?

Do you agree with Paul's thoughts? Contact us at:

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Arcade-opoly

Fans of *Monopoly* and classic games should enjoy this board game by Park Productions. While it's gameplay will seem a little old-fashioned to newer board gamers, it still manages to be quite entertaining, with players buying machines (with amusing names such as *Wonkey Kong* or *Ghost Chaser*) and attempting to earn 70 quarters before going bust. The production values aren't the greatest and the rules need clarifying, but it's still an entertaining take on the classic board game.
Price: £29.99 (£14.99 mini edition)
From: parkproductions.co.uk

The Untold History Of Japanese Game Developers: Volume 2

John Szczepaniak had so much content left over from his first book that he's been able to compile a second. Like *Volume 1* it's packed with fascinating anecdotes and trivia from Japanese developers and companies that are rarely interviewed, including Michitaka Tsuruta, Rica Matsumura, Human Entertainment and Masaya. It's once again let down by a lack of colour images, but it's a small quibble considering the rarity of the content.
Price: £24.99 **From:** amazon.co.uk

Power Base FM Slim

This useful device serves two purposes. The first is acting as an adaptor, so that you can use Master System games on your Mega Drive. Even better, however, is the fact that it restores the FM soundtracks to over 40 games, including *California Games*, *Double Dragon* and *Rampage*. The only real downside is that it's impossible to switch between the two soundtracks, and a few (like *OutRun*) sound awful.
Price: £59.99
From: retrotowers.co.uk



Sinclair ZX Spectrum: A Visual Compendium

PICK OF THE MONTH

We're big fans of the earlier *Visual Compendiums*, so it's pleasing to see Bitmap Books finally move over to the popular Spectrum. It follows a similar format to the earlier books in the series, meaning there are lots of close-ups of stunning pixel art, numerous anecdotes from various coders and journalists of the time, and the occasional hardware and art spreads (which still feel a little out of place). While the number of interviewees is of a high standard, special mention must go to the inclusion of the media-shy Stamper brothers, even if their extracts and insight are painfully brief. A stunning book that every Spectrum fan should own.
Price: £27.99 **Buy it from:** Funstockretro.co.uk

Mega Drive Everdrive V2

If you're interesting in investigating the ever-growing Mega Drive homebrew scene you'll want an Everdrive. It supports Master System, Genesis, Mega Drive and 32X games (you'll need the hardware for the latter) and boasts fast loading times. It's easy to load ROMs, it has support for the Action Replay and Game Genie, and it supports micro-SD cards up to 32GB in size. The on-screen menus are easy to use, while games are very quick to load. A very useful peripheral indeed.
Price: £109.99
From: retrotowers.co.uk


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a moment with...



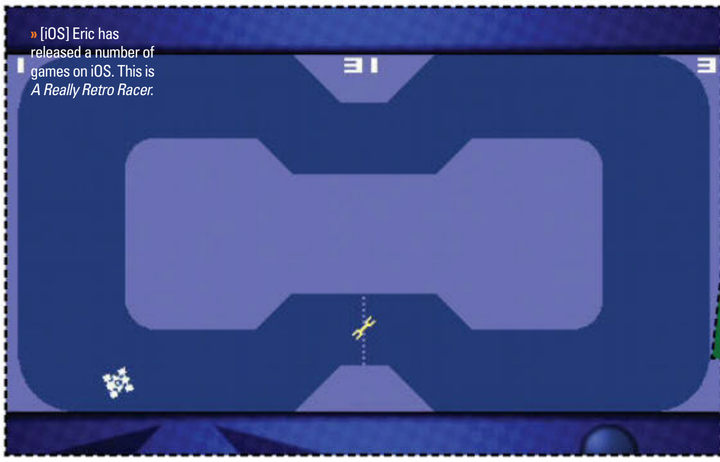
Park Productions

Eric Park on combining board and videogames

Why did you set up Park Productions?
In 1990 I was looking for a name to place on the title screens of my BASIC games for my Amstrad CPC and the school's BBC Micro. Every game, book and now board game since has carried the name from the CPC/BBC to Amiga, PC/Mac and currently iOS and soon Android.

Why make board games?
My dad is a big board gamer with over 100 games and I had just finished making a mobile game. Taking a break from videogame making I decided it would be fun to make a board game for a change. The rules and actions of board games and the logic for videogames are very similar and I already had the various software required, making it an easy decision to make a physical board game. First was the *OutRun*-based *Formula Freeway* followed by *Side Pocket Pool* and now *Arcade-opoly*. My next mobile videogame eventually turned out to be the digital version of *Arcade-opoly*.

Where did the idea for *Arcade-opoly* originate?
I often wondered why the various *-opoly* games over the years, despite their many themes, had never catered the rules to match their theme. Nintendo and Sonic editions still play as normal – why not continue the videogame theme into the rulebook? I then thought about what theme would I most like to play? Videogames! This led to arcade games specifically, as this allowed the arcade cabinet to replace the traditional house piece, which, in turn, led to quarters being included to play the games.



» [iOS] Eric has released a number of games on iOS. This is *A Really Retro Racer*.

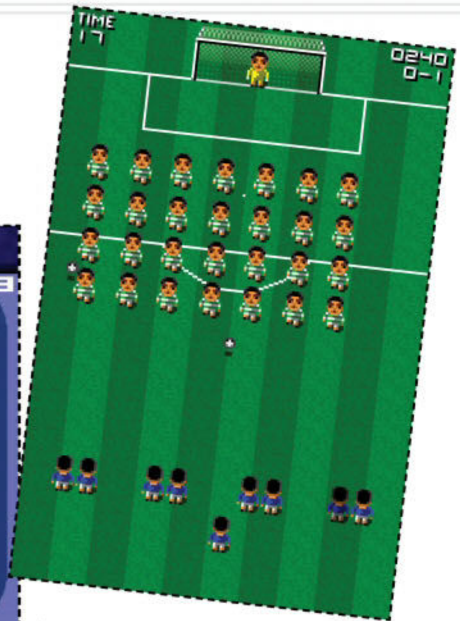
How long did it take to create?
From idea through to design, graphics, rules and many, many nights playtesting, it took four months to complete. An additional month was taken submitting *Arcade-opoly* to toy agents. Surprisingly it was rejected not for being an *-opoly* game but for not having a unique game mechanic and being too traditional.

How greatly does *Arcade-opoly* differentiate from *Monopoly*?
Arcade-opoly's board is set out as the interior of a classic arcade where players dash around buying and playing games. A two-dice mechanic from which players choose only one for moving their character adds strategy with money being earned in quarters from the cabinets. Total earnings from your cabinets are then tracked on the outer board on *Pac-Man* dots. Gameplay cards then add events like Game Crashes, Power Cuts, Free Repairs and Free Plays in keeping with the arcade action theme. Each playtime is just under 45 minutes.



Can you briefly explain the aim of the game?
One to four players dash around the arcade in a bid to buy and install the best arcade cabinets in order to be the first to earn 70 quarters.

Did you make any attempt to license the names of any proper arcade games?
From the very beginning of design it was decided that the arcade game names would be fun alternatives. This added humour and, from an initial list of a 100 games, led to names such as *Ghost Chaser*, *Wonkey Kong* and *Twin Dragon*.



» [iOS] *Soccer Invaders* is a football-themed take on *Space Invaders*. It's known as *Football Invaders* stateside.

How are our readers able to buy *Arcade-opoly*?
Arcade-opoly is manufactured by USA firm The Game Crafter. A mini-box edition cleverly renamed *Arcadeopoly* that replaces the board with randomly placed tiles is also available and more details can be found on my website at parkproductions.co.uk.

Why do you think there's still so much interest in the arcade scene?
Modern videogames have moved on becoming less like older videogames and more realistic, complex and multiplayer. Arcade games, on the other hand, offer immediate action and instant control. No tutorials, save points or maps are needed. It's just the player standing in a one-on-one battle against the machine itself. ✱

» Here's a look at the original design note for *Arcade-opoly*.





» The game features some very oddly-named versions of classic games.


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BACK TO THE NINETIES





[PlayStation] Solid Snake's first outing on the PlayStation was superb. Modern stealth games were born with *MGS*.

THE LATEST NEWS FROM FEBRUARY 1999

FEBRUARY 1999 – a new name for Nuon, Alpha Centauri lays down roots, Crazy Taxi crashes in, Guitar Freaks hits the right notes while X-Wing Alliance feels the force. Richard Burton finds your lack of an Amstrad disturbing…



The mysterious Project-X had finally been given a proper name. Nuon was the name and an expanded and enhanced format for DVD was the game. Apparently it would replace your standard DVD player becoming the central hub of your entertainment and multimedia centre requirements and Jeff Minter, he of Llamasoft fame, was developing games for it, including *Tempest 3000*, a new version of the Atari classic.

The spirit of *Civilization* was alive and well with Firaxis Games' latest project, *Sid Meier's Alpha Centauri* on PC. Set in the 22nd Century, this turn-based strategy game was more than just *Civilization* set in space. Yes, you have to build a community from scratch but rather than starting with a primitive yet harmonious society as created in Civilization, *Alpha Centauri* fragments your pre-constructed, cryogenically frozen, spaceship-dwelling community from the off with a rather simple, yet intriguing, backstory.

Your spaceship crew, sent to Alpha Centauri from an overcrowded Earth with the intention of building a new world, awakes from deep freeze. The crew soon finds that the captain has been murdered with no one knowing who did the interstellar deed. The crew decide to split into factions with their own ideologies and agendas and go their own way. Seven different groups are created with equal share of the resources from the spaceship and with this the building of a new world begins with much trading, exploration, terraforming and research.

Alpha Centauri is a huge game, in size and potential, with so many intertwined elements that it initially becomes overwhelming. However, it soon opens up into a total immersion game that is incredibly difficult to walk away from. It's a brilliantly constructed game with layer after layer of depth and subtlety and is arguably better than any of the *Civilization* series.

Instalment number eight of *Final Fantasy* was released by Squaresoft on the PlayStation. The role-playing game, the second in the series to be made in 3D (or, at least, 3D characters overlaid on layers of 2D pre-rendered backgrounds), once again sees three modes of play; the world map, the field map and the battle screen.

Final Fantasy VIII had continued with the science fiction edge that *FFVII* established. Much of the ATB gameplay mechanics are recognisable from previous *Final Fantasy* outings although the development of characters has been tweaked with no MP and character classes. Instead stock is 'drawn' from your opponent in battle.

You play Squall Leonhart who must stop the sorceress Edea but later finds that she is just a pawn of another sorceress from the future, Ultimecia, who wants to start 'Time Kompression', freezing all of time into one solitary moment. The game was well-received with very strong sales shifting 2.5 million units in its first four days of release in Japan.

Arcade land was positively throbbing with new releases this month the most impressive of which was *Crazy Taxi* by Sega. The open world racing game saw you collecting customers in



[PlayStation] *FFVIII* was not just a great game, but profitable too. First quarter sales amounted to $50 million.



[PC] *Star Wars* returns to PC with *X-Wing Alliance*. The force is most definitely strong with this one.

THIS MONTH IN…

COMPUTER & VIDEOGAMES

C&VG featured the incredible demand for the new *Zelda* game, *Ocarina Of Time*. Nintendo's distributor requested 250,000 copies but received only 225,000. Only 100,000 made it to retail, of which 62,000 were available to customers. The other copies were presumably reserved for pre-orders.



GAMEPRO

The multiformat magazine took an in-depth look at Nintendo's new Expansion Pack add-on for its N64 console. For $30 you could get an extra 4MB of RAM. This was very handy for developers, too, as many had stated they had previously had to trim non-essential detail from projects, such was the memory restrictions.



AMIGA FORMAT

The latest owners of the Amiga brand name revealed their plans for the iconic 16-bit machine. It was to have a new operating system called QNX and planned to be HAVi compatible meaning different products from different manufacturers would have interoperability and plug and play connectivity.



your taxi and racing them across town to get them to their destination in the shortest time possible. With big green directional arrows pointing the way you can perform stunts or drive like a crazed loon to earn extra cash as you battle against the clock.

Crazy Taxi was a supremely fast-paced racer with a unique and quirky gameplay system. Graphically lovely, this was backed up with a suitably adrenaline-inducing soundtrack by the American rock band, *The Offspring*. *Crazy Taxi* was the first in a new series of six Sega coin-op videogames arriving throughout 1999 under the banner of *Real Life Career Series* which included such quirky titles as *Emergency Call Ambulance* and *18 Wheeler: American Pro Trucker*.

If you ever fancied yourself as an axe man in a rock band then *Guitar Freaks* by Konami would be the coin-op for you. *Guitar Freaks* is a rhythm game in which you must match and play the notes as they appear and 'pluck' the guitar controller which simulated the strings. Each note played was rated; score enough and you would progress.

Guitar Freaks was an excellent game, offering something different to existing rhythm games and it really paved the way for such home console games like *Guitar Hero*. It also proved lucrative and popular for Konami, so much so that *Guitar Freaks* is still going strong today with the 26th coin-op incarnation being the latest in a long line of plank spankingly good arcade games.



[Arcade] The first in Sega's arcade series of *Real Life Career Series* coin-ops was the brilliant *Crazy Taxi*. It was also the best of the bunch.

Also released but not thrilling gamers was *Power Stone* by Capcom. The 3D brawler was a novel arena-based beat-'em-up, with an excellent control system that made it a cinch to attack other players with projectile missiles. It received an enjoyable sequel in 2000.

Solid Snake and his *Metal Gear Solid* game finally arrived on the PlayStation in Europe, months behind every other territory. The stealth game saw Snake take on terrorists who have control of a nuclear weapons facility. He must stop the threat of a nuclear launch with cunning, stealth and an occasional well placed sniper shot between the eyes.

New and exclusive for PC this month was *Star Wars: X-Wing Alliance*, another in the first-person perspective in-cockpit space simulation games from LucasArts. In this latest *Star Wars* game you play a son from a family of merchants who specialise in space trading. Your missions are split between family business related tasks and support for the Rebel Alliance which eventually sees you take part in the Battle Of Endor and take on the second Death Star. *



[PC] *Sid Meier's Civilization* was good but *Sid Meier's Alpha Centauri* is better. Well done Sid Meier.

CHARTS

FEBRUARY 1999

NINTENDO 64



1. Legend Of Zelda: Ocarina Of Time (Nintendo)
2. WCW Vs NWO: Revenge (THQ)
3. 1080 Snowboarding (Nintendo)
4. F1 World Grand Prix (Nintendo)
5. F-Zero X (Nintendo)

PLAYSTATION



1. FIFA 99 (Electronic Arts)
2. Tomb Raider 3 (Eidos)
3. Crash Bandicoot 3 (Sony)
4. Toca 2 Touring Cars (Codemasters)
5. Brian Lara Cricket 99 (Codemasters)

PC



1. Tomb Raider 3 (Eidos)
2. Half-Life (Sierra On-Line)
3. FIFA 99 (Electronic Arts)
4. South Park (Acclaim)
5. Worms (Sold Out)

MUSIC



1. Maria (Blondie)
2. Baby One More Time (Britney Spears)
3. Fly Away (Lenny Kravitz)
4. You Don't Know Me (Armand Van Helden Ft. Duane Harden)
5. Pretty Fly (For A White Guy) (The Offspring)

NEWS FEBRUARY 1999

2 February saw Glenn Hoddle, the England football team manager, sacked following an interview with *The Times* newspaper in which his views on faith, Eileen Drewery (a faith healer he employed as part of the England backroom team) and insensitive comments regarding disability caused a public backlash. He refused to resign but the FA forced him out shortly afterwards.

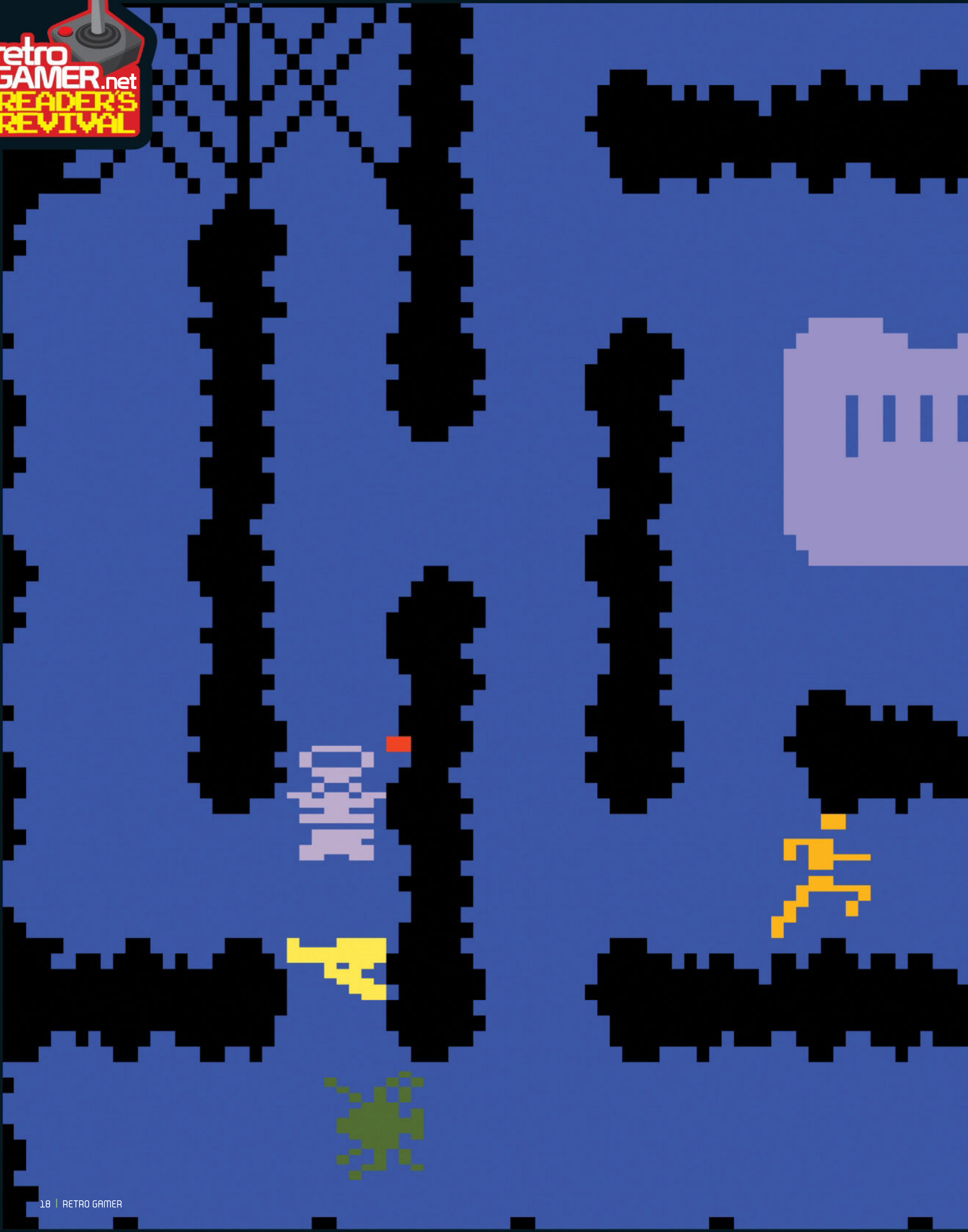
3 February saw the passing of DC Comic's first editor Vincent Sullivan. He was responsible for acquiring Superman from the creators Siegel and Schuster for National Allied Publications (evolving later into DC Comics). He edited the first issue of *Action Comics* in 1938 in which Superman made his first appearance and also had a hand in bringing Batman to DC.

5 February saw the world premiere of *Payback*, the action movie starring Mel Gibson. Gibson plays Porter, an ex-marine turned criminal who goes looking for a crime syndicate who have his share of a robbery but not before being shot in the back by his wife and his best friend. …

12 February also saw the premier of the Disney movie *My Favourite Martian* starring Christopher Lloyd and Jeff Daniels. Out of luck and friends, Tim O'Hara (Daniels) discovers a Martian called Martin (Lloyd) and they become chums but will Tim reveal Martin to the world or help his friend fix his spaceship and get home? Sadly for all involved in the film, *My Favourite Martian* bombed.

Music albums released this month included *The Slim Shady LP* (Eminem), *Apple Venus Volume 1* (XTC), *Dosage* (Collective Soul) and *No Exit* (Blondie).







Night Stalker

"I THINK THE VERY WORD STALKING IMPLIES THAT YOU'RE NOT SUPPOSED TO LIKE IT"

#96

» MATTEL ELECTRONICS » INTELLIVISION » 1982

Well, you have gone and done it again. You're stuck in a maze and there doesn't seem to be a way out. Worse yet, you are not alone.

Night Stalker is a single screen game where the player starts in a cell. The first thing you'll need to do is arm yourself. Somewhere in the maze is a gun with six bullets in it, that'll do the trick. Also lurking in the maze are a couple of bats that can poison you for a couple of seconds, a giant spider the size of you which can do the same thing, oh, and there's also a robot around the corner and it can fire bullets back at you.

Once your six bullets have been used, another gun will appear. The chances are it will be nowhere near your current position. Slowly the robot will follow you around the maze. Shoot the robot and after a few seconds another comes along to take its place. But after killing this robot half a dozen times, a different and faster one appears. Then after that another one appears and this will take a couple of shots to destroy as it has shields. Oh and if you shoot enough bats more robots take their place!

Night Stalker has this sound that's a bit like a heartbeat as you play the game. It gives the game some atmosphere and tension. It can be quite slow going and you find your interest will fade away. But you can do a lot worse for 1982.

ASH H

Whether you were working on a follow-up, working on a competitor or simply feeding arcade machines your hard-earned coins, Street Fighter II changed the gaming landscape. Nick Thorpe looks back at the impact of Capcom's classic brawler





S*treet Fighter* was a game that made an impact, but it wasn't a huge impact. It was popular, in part due to its deluxe cabinet featuring pressure-sensitive buttons (a gimmick co-developed with Atari), and did decent business in the arcades and on home formats. What's more, SNK headhunted Takashi Nishiyama and Hiroshi Matsumoto, the game's director and planner respectively. However, it wasn't a broadly influential game or one that particularly screamed out for a sequel.

As a result, Capcom found itself in a dilemma – it had established the *Street Fighter* brand and got some momentum behind it, so it was keen to continue using the name in some fashion, but the key players had left the company and it didn't particularly want to make a new one-on-one fighting game. The fighting genre wasn't exactly a huge deal in the arcades or at home, having seemingly peaked a couple of years earlier with the likes of *Yie Ar Kung-Fu, Way Of The Exploding Fist* and *International Karate*.

That's why the first two attempts to follow up on *Street Fighter* weren't competitive fighting games. *Final Fight*, a scrolling beat-'em-up designed to compete with the likes of the *Double Dragon*, was originally marketed as *Street Fighter '89* before being renamed. A year later, the infamously dodgy *Street Fighter 2010* arrived on the NES and ventured into safe platform shooter territory.

Just as Capcom wasn't keen to make a direct follow-up to *Street Fighter*, other developers weren't looking to it for inspiration. "I remember playing the *Street Fighter* machine at my movie arcade with the giant punch buttons and loving it despite those lame buttons," says Michael Latham, who worked on a variety of fighting games during his time at Activision and Sega. However, the older games were still the key reference points for his early work in the genre. ▶



SPECIAL MOVES

(WW) Hadoken:
↓↘→

(WW) Shoryuken:
→↓↘

(WW) Tatsumaki Senpukyaku:
↓↙←

(HF) Kuchu Tatsumaki Senpukyaku:
↓↙← (In air)

(SU) Shakunetsu Hadoken:
←↙↓↘→

SUPER MOVE

(ST) Shinku Hadoken:
↓↘→↓↘→



» [Arcade] Meditation hasn't done a lot of good for Dhalsim's hot temper.

GAME SERIES KEY

WW Street Fighter II **CE** Street Fighter II': Champion Edition
HF Street Fighter II' Turbo: Hyper Fighting **SU** Super Street Fighter II
ST Super Street Fighter II Turbo

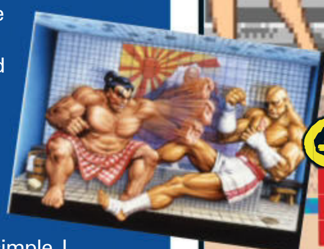
ART ATTACK

Mick McGinty talks us through some of his Street Fighter II box art

How much reference material were you given for an illustration such as this?



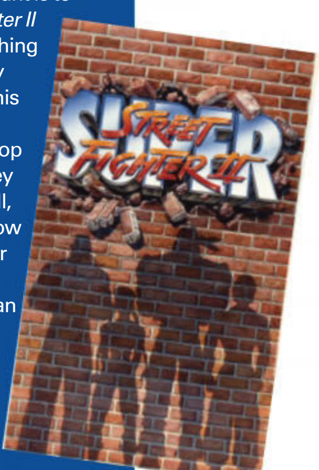
Hardly none. It was a Polaroid camera shot, Denny Moore sent me a couple of Polaroid shots that the manufacturers would send. The characters that they sent me, I saw them all in digital form. I'd get an idea of the background – "We've got this project called *Street Fighter*, it's very big in Japan, and we want a very American-looking image in order to promote it and put it on the cover." I just thought of a really dramatically lit alley scene with trash cans getting knocked over and the brick wall in the background. They might have even given me the choice on this one to choose the characters, and the most exciting and interesting one to me was Blanka – his cannonball would look great coming in from the left.



Turbo is one of my more favourite ones, I don't know why. I guess just because it was simple. I remember doing the first couple of sketches, and Denny Moore took it to Capcom and they said, 'We really want this punch attack.' What they really wanted to facilitate was a whole bunch of 'ghost hands,' and what I had was one big punch going straight at Sagat. But I just like it because it's really straightforward and you get a good look at the characters. I went into muscle building magazines and tried to make E. Honda sort of super big and muscular, rather than just layers of fat – especially the shoulders. They said, 'Go crazy, make these guys look really bad – they're the best fighters in the world and they're knocking each other around the room.'

This one's a very different look from the other ones, as it's just the character silhouettes…

Well, how it started was that I did just the top section, that just says *Super Street Fighter II*. Then Denny says, 'Okay, what they want is to have you re-illustrate this *Street Fighter II* in wet paint' – I literally copied something that was given to me – "and then they want the word super busting out of this brick wall." And that was actually the cover to some other format, just the top part, and then the shadowy thing, they said, 'We want you to do a bigger wall, with some light that's casting a shadow of other characters,' – I can remember the Indian chief and the little girl with the beret, she reminded me of a Cuban martial arts girl, I don't know why. It's kind of a weird-looking illustration when you think about it.





» [Arcade] Throwing is an important tool to use against defensively-minded opponents.



» [Arcade] Bringing bosses into the mix was a huge boost to *Champion Edition*'s multiplayer.

▶ "1984 was the year that my desire to make a fighting game started. I was a senior in high-school and arcades were at the heights of being a huge thing," Michael explains. "*Karate Champ* was the first 2D fighting game where I could challenge other players. I was obsessed with this coin-op. Countless hours and quarters went into playing the computer training hard so I could beat any challenger. I remember it being hard to find challengers as people would get angry if you beat them quickly, as it seemed like a waste of a quarter." Alongside *Kung Fu Master* and *Karateka*, this was the game that Michael was thinking of while working on the 1989 fighter *Tongue Of The Fatman*.

There are conflicting explanations of the actual circumstances that caused the eventual production of *Street Fighter II*, but the most corroborated story from developers is that Capcom had asked for a *Final Fight* sequel and the team decided to make a *Street Fighter* sequel instead – an ironic reversal of the situation two years prior. With the previous game's lead designers elsewhere, a new team took on the challenge and brought with them some new ideas. For a start, art was a huge part of the game design, with half of the staff working on it. This allowed Capcom to generate a huge number of ideas and provide a cast that was almost entirely new, with only three returning characters – protagonist Ryu, final boss Sagat, and player two's Ryu clone, Ken. The new characters were to be based on broad stereotypes of various nationalities.

The other big difference was that *SFII* would be focused on competitive gameplay, an aspect of arcade gaming that had been crucial to the



KEN

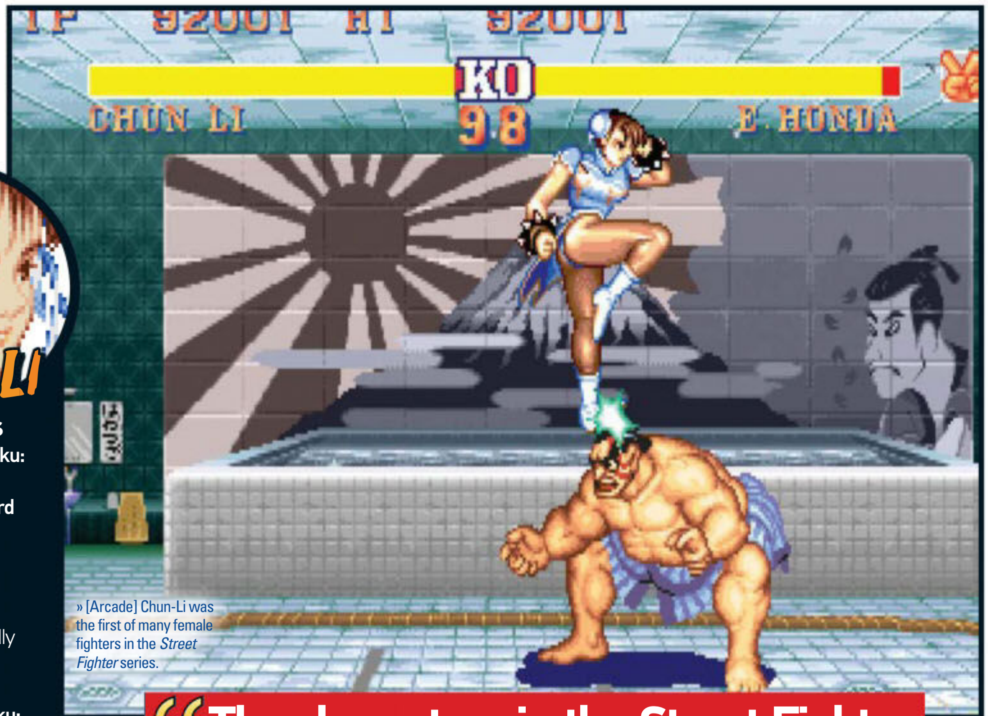
SPECIAL MOVES

(WW) Hadoken:
↓↘→◉
(WW) Shoryuken:
→↓↘◉
(WW) Tatsumaki Senpukyaku:
↓↙←◉
(HF) Kuchu Tatsumaki Senpukyaku:
↓↙←◉ (In air)
(ST) Kama Barai Geri:
↓↘→◉
(ST) Nata Otoshi Geri:
→↘↓◉
(ST) Oosoto Mawashi Geri:
←↙↓↘→◉
(ST) Inazuma Kakato Wari:
Hold ◉ during any Geri attack

SUPER MOVE

(ST) Shouryu Reppa:
↓↘→↓↘→◉





» [Arcade] Chun-Li was the first of many female fighters in the *Street Fighter* series.



CHUN LI

SPECIAL MOVES
(WW) Yousou Kyaku:
↓ (In air)
(WW) Spinning Bird Kick:
↓ (Hold), ↑
(WW) Hyakuretsu Kyaku:
(Tap) repeatedly
(HF) Kikouken:
← (Hold), →
(ST) Tenshou Kyaku:
↙ (Hold), → ↓ ← ↗
(ST) Inazuma
SUPER MOVE
(ST) Senretsu Kyaku:
← (Hold), → ← →

> "The characters in the Street Fighter series are fantastical"
> Yoshinori Ono

success of early games like *Pong*, but which had fallen out of favour over the years due to the rise of co-op play and high score tables. Capcom's idea was that encouraging two-player games would maximise revenue for arcade operators, and unlike a co-op game players couldn't feel cheated by a high difficulty level. Of course, the original game also had a multiplayer mode, but players were limited to two characters with identical abilities. This was a much poorer experience than the single-player mode, which allowed players to fight ten opponents with a variety of techniques.

Street Fighter II proved to be a major production for the era. With a development team of approximately 35, the game cost almost $2.5 million to make. It was a real gamble for a sequel to a game that hadn't set the world on fire, but one which had evidently paid off when you saw the game's astonishing visuals and heard the excellent music. But while those aspects were great, what sent it over the top was the design.

Much like its predecessor, *Street Fighter II* challenges players to win a series of one-on-one fights in a bid to win a fighting tournament. It retains some of the gameplay characteristics of the original game, including a control scheme with three strength options for punching and kicking, as well as the inclusion of special moves accessed with combinations of movements and button presses. In the single-player mode, you'll face off against the characters you didn't pick before taking on the game's four bosses – Balrog, Vega, Sagat and M. Bison. To break up the game a little, you're challenged to a bonus game every few rounds in which you destroy objects like a car, barrels and oil drums. Once M. Bison is defeated, you'll see a unique ending sequence for your character.

Unlike the original game, *Street Fighter II* gives you the choice of eight characters with distinct fighting styles, and they were an eye-catching bunch. Whether you were looking at Guile's bizarre haircut, Dhalsim's rubber limbs or the lightning hands of E. Honda, you were definitely looking at them – and each boasted a unique background themed around their nationality as well as a memorable theme tune. Yoshinori Ono, the executive producer of *Street Fighter V* and a veteran of the series, attributes much of the game's success to cast of characters. "The characters in the *Street Fighter* series are fantastical and couldn't really exist in the real world, but they all have their charms and amusing moves, expressions and storylines," he says.

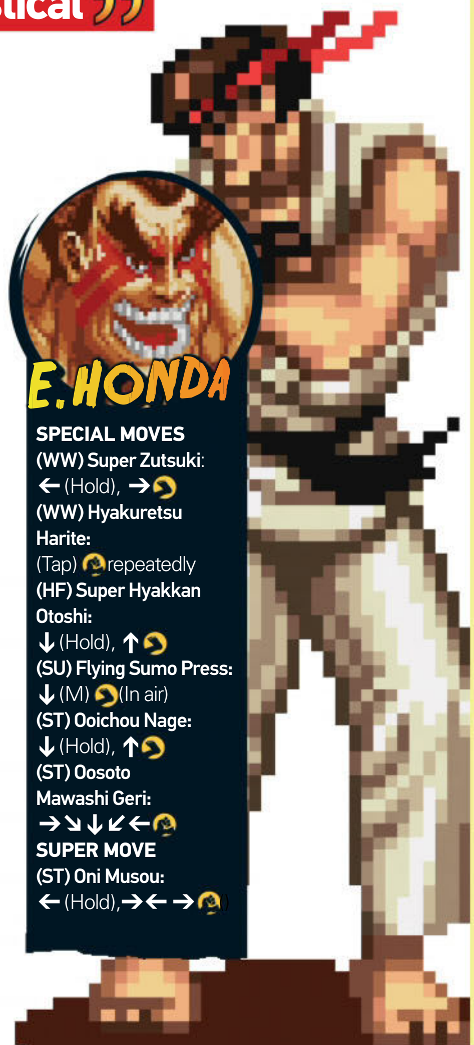
Given that, it's no surprise that his favourite cast member is Blanka, the green-skinned wild man with an animalistic fighting style. "I mean, you bash the buttons and he releases electricity from his body! You wouldn't see that in an ordinary game or in a movie. Even the animations for his basic punch and kick moves are just really funny to me. Finding those humorous aspects within the potentially quite serious setting of playing an eSports ▶



» [Arcade] "How could you not love that face?" laughs Ono. It's hard not to, that's for sure.



» [Arcade] Each character's special moves were unique, and allowed players to respond to a variety of threats.



E. HONDA

SPECIAL MOVES
(WW) Super Zutsuki:
← (Hold), →
(WW) Hyakuretsu Harite:
(Tap) repeatedly
(HF) Super Hyakkan Otoshi:
↓ (Hold), ↑
(SU) Flying Sumo Press:
↓ (M) (In air)
(ST) Ooichou Nage:
↓ (Hold), ↑
(ST) Oosoto Mawashi Geri:
→ ↘ ↓ ↙ ←
SUPER MOVE
(ST) Oni Musou:
← (Hold), → ← →

▶ match of *Street Fighter* is, I think, one of the reasons the fans have continued to love the series as long as they have, and it's also one of the reasons why I love it."



BLANKA

SPECIAL MOVES
(WW) Electric Thunder:
(Tap)
(WW) Rolling Attack:
← (Hold), →
(HF) Vertical Rolling:
↓ (Hold), ↑
(SU) Backstep Rolling:
← (Hold), →
(ST) Surprise Forward:
→ (All)
(ST) Surprise Back:
← (All)
SUPER MOVE
(ST) Ground Shave Rolling:
← (Hold), → ← →
(Hold)



» [Arcade] With Ryu vs Ryu mirror matches possible in *ChampionEdition*, Ken became his own character.

Peter Rosas rose to prominence on the competitive *Street Fighter* scene under the name Combofiend before joining Capcom himself, and shares a similar view. "Worldwide, anyone who's ever played videogames is aware of Ryu and his Hadoken and of Chun-Li and her lightning kicks. Regardless of what platform it's on, people relish using *Street Fighter II*'s iconic characters to fight one another while performing those characters' simplistic signature attacks." Indeed, everyone has a favourite.

Michael first encountered the game at Sega, where a cabinet had been bought for research on its own fighting game, *Eternal Champions*. "For a period of time I was the office champ using Chun-Li as my character," he recalls. "Sadly, some of the testers learned my play and soon crushed me." Mark Starkey, owner of London arcade The Heart Of Gaming, leans towards Ken. "Ken was an aggressive Ryu with more combos, and his rotation-based execution meant the pace of the matches was always fast," he explains.

The additional characters certainly added longevity to the single-player game, as players could opt to try to win the tournament with each of them individually, but arguably the game's biggest impact was in bringing an element of direct competition back to arcades. "Previously all two-player games had been co-operative rather than competitive," Mark recalls. "*Street Fighter II* revolutionised this, pitting players against each other, all determined to not be the person forced to go and change up more money in front of their peers in order to be able to continue." Peter points to the widened character roster as a key reason that the game took off competitively. "Regardless of your style, there was one character amongst the eight that would fit. On top of that, the speed, fluidity of controls and ability to perform combos really made *Street Fighter II* stand out ahead of its time."

Ono agrees. "I can still remember clearly the feeling of not playing a game so much as being able to take on an opponent in such a visceral way," he says. "At the time there weren't that many videogames that allowed you to compete against someone like that, the same way as you would when playing sports or indoor games like pool and darts."

> **"Worldwide, anyone who's ever played videogames is aware of Ryu and his Hadoken or Chun-Li and her lightning kicks"**
> Peter Rosas

What elevated *Street Fighter II* from a trend to a phenomenon was its fighting system, which boasted depth. "I would say *Street Fighter II* cracked the next step of how an interactive fighting system worked," says Michael. "Back in the *Tongue Of The Fatman* days the fighting systems were very 'rock, paper, scissors'. Both people could launch either an attack, defence, or projectile in some cases. *Street Fighter II* was the dawn of combos. The ability to string a combo of moves was the game changer. It made the game play fluid and far more strategic."

The ability to perform combos – attacks which cancel the animation of previous attacks, leaving the opponent no recovery time – was an unintended side effect of an attempt to make special moves easier to perform. "It opened up an entirely new feeling of what was possible in a fighting game," says Peter. "Prior to the introduction of this glitch, which then became a mainstay, fighting games consisted of slow attacks where the entire action needed to be completed before the next action could be performed. This ultimately left fighting games feeling rather stiff."

Of course, the combo system wasn't the only glitch in *Street Fighter II*, and the game's director Akira Nishitani had been privately fixing them up for personal satisfaction. However, they'd soon be put to use. Demand from Capcom's American branch turned *Street Fighter II* from a static game into an experience which evolved over the years with updates, in response to market developments and the findings of competitive players. Capcom's approach was bold: while the concept of updating an cabinet was hardly new, the upgrade kit was often a overhaul or a completely new game. *Street Fighter II* received four upgrades over the course of three years, all of which left the core of the game intact.

The first updated version, titled *Street Fighter II': Champion Edition*, was released just over a year after the original version in March 1992. The multiplayer game was refreshed with a huge number of new match-ups, thanks



GUILE

SPECIAL MOVES
(WW) Sonic Boom:
← (Hold), →
(WW) Somersault Kick:
↓ (Hold), ↑
(WW) Flying Buster Drop:
↓ (M) (H) (In air)
(WW) Flying Mare:
↓ (M) (H) (In air)
SUPER MOVE
(ST) Double Somersault Kick:
↙ (Hold), ↘ ↙ ↗



» [Arcade] *Turbo* brought new moves for most characters, like Chun-Li's projectile attack.



» [Arcade] Cammy is arguably the most popular of *Super Street Fighter II*'s new challengers.

to the new ability for both players to pick the same character, as well as the much more enticing ability to play as the four boss characters. Beyond that, the revision brought bug fixes, a set of move tweaks designed to rebalance the game and some minor graphical updates.

The ease of replacing chips on the *Champion Edition* board gave way to a slew of unofficial updates – notably *Rainbow Edition*, a fast-paced hack which broke the game balance with airborne special moves and bizarre projectile behaviour. At the end of 1992, *Street Fighter II' Turbo: Hyper Fighting* arrived as a playable official alternative. As well as giving seven of the original eight playable characters a new special move (with Guile losing out), the game's speed was noticeably increased. While it sounds like a fairly minor update compared to *Champion Edition*, it is fondly remembered: "I believe it to be the best all-rounder," says Mark. "The game was balanced, and improved on the limitations of its predecessor with extra speed, extra moves and damage levels with better balancing. It's still very popular at arcades in the East." ▶

TEAM PICKS

The **Retro Gamer** team looks back at their favourite Street Fighter characters

DARRAN
Chararcter: Zangief

■ 'The Darran Jones Factor' has been circulating around the office for years. It refers to my ability to manically rotate the joystick to pull off insanely quick piledrivers. Therefore I play Zangief.

NICK
Chararcter: Ryu

■ Boring? Maybe, but Ryu perfectly fits my image of what a badass martial artist looks like, complete with white gi and a black belt – as a young karate student, he was what I wanted to be.

JON
Chararcter: Blanka

■ I like to play a defensive game and then slide in with a rolling attack or floor slide. For me, Blanka provides the best chance at keeping my distance but then also ability to get in close if needs be.

DREW
Chararcter: Chun-Li

■ It was not the Hadoken, but Chun's lightning legs (Hyakuretsu Kyaku) that wowed me in *Street Fighter II*. She's such a good all-rounder, and I still play Chun-Li to this day on *Street Fighter V*.





DHALSIM

SPECIAL MOVES
(WW) Yoga Fire:
↓↘→[P]
(WW) Yoga Flame:
←↙↓↘→[P]
(WW) Drill Zutsuki:
↓(H) [P](In air)
(WW) Drill Kick:
↓(H) [K](In air)
(HF) Yoga Teleport (Forward):
→↓↘(All)[P]or [K]
(HF) Yoga Teleport (Backward):
←↓↙(All)[P]or [K]
(ST) Yoga Blast:
←↙↓↘→[K]
SUPER MOVE
(ST) Yoga Inferno:
→↘↓↙←
→↘↓↙←[P]

ZANGIEF

SPECIAL MOVES
(WW) Double Lariat:
(All)[P]
(WW) Screw Piledriver:
(360)[P]
(HF) Quick Lariat:
(All)[K]
(SU) Flying Powerbomb:
(360)[K]
(SU) Atomic Suplex:
(360)[K](Close)
(ST) Banishing Flat:
→↘↓[P]
SUPER MOVE
(ST) Final Atomic Buster:
2x(360)[P]

SAGAT

SPECIAL MOVES
(CE) Tiger Shot:
↓↘→[P]
(CE) Ground Tiger Shot:
↓↘→[K]
(CE) Tiger Uppercut:
→↓↘[P]
(CE) Tiger Knee Crush:
↓↘→↗[K]
SUPER MOVE
(ST) Tiger Genocide:
↓↘→↘→[P]



Did You Know

■ There's a hidden catch-up mechanic in *Street Fighter II* – if your opponent has won more rounds than you, your throws will deal some extra damage to help you out a bit.

■ In order to clue players in to the existence of special moves, every button press in the original arcade version of *Street Fighter II* carries a 1-in-512 chance of triggering a special move.

■ The team's original intention was that all projectiles could be avoided by crouching, but those plans were scrapped due to how good the now-familiar Hadoken animation looked.

■ *Divekick*, *Shovel Knight* and *Kaiju Combat* all feature The Baz, a character based on an unused piece of *Street Fighter II* concept art depicting a bullfighter wearing a T-shirt that reads 'Zubaz'.

■ Dee Jay's trousers were originally going to bear the word 'Mantis', but the word was changed to read 'Maximum' because the word still read properly when the sprite was flipped.

▶ Arguably the most major update to *Street Fighter II* came with the game's move to the CPS2 arcade board. *Super Street Fighter II: The New Challengers* was a big overhaul, featuring four brand new characters with their own backgrounds and theme tunes. Fei Long was a clear homage to Bruce Lee and Dee Jay, the first character to be designed by Capcom USA, was fashioned after the martial artist and Tae Bo creator Billy Blanks. T. Hawk (short for Thunder Hawk) was a Mexican powerhouse, while the UK's Cammy was an amnesiac assassin with a mysterious connection to M. Bison.

"I think the new characters added some new ways to play," says Peter. "A good example is T.Hawk. With this introduction, a new grappler entered the fray, yet instead of being ground-based, he was more mobile and able close the distance on the opponent's way faster than Zangief could. Having a mobile grappler was something unseen in *Street Fighter*, and was truly daring."



Balrog

SPECIAL MOVES

(CE) Dash Upper
← (Hold), →

CE) Dash Straight:
← (Hold), →

(CE) Turn Punch:
(All)/(All)
(Hold), release

(SU) Buffalo Headbutt:
↓ (Hold), ↑

(ST) Dash Ground Upper:
← (Hold) ↘

(ST) Dash Ground Straight:
← (Hold) ↘

SUPER MOVE

(ST) Crazy Buffalo:
← (Hold), → ← →

As *Super Street Fighter II* was running on more powerful hardware than the first three versions, those weren't the only changes. "On-screen combo counters, remixed music, as well as character detailing. We ate up what was thrown at us," Mark recalls. But, the game was a step back in one regard – the additional speed found in *Street Fighter II Turbo* was nowhere to be seen.

The last of the contemporary updates was *Super Street Fighter II Turbo*, which brought back the higher speeds of *Street Fighter II Turbo*. However, its major innovation was the addition of Super moves – powerful multi-hit combos that could only be performed once the gauge at the bottom of the screen had been completely filled. The game also added throw escapes, which allowed players to reduce damage when being thrown, but removed the Tournament Battle mode and the bonus stages.

Looking back on the updates, Peter is positive about their impact: "Although I liked some more than others, I felt each were a necessity as Capcom further refined not only how *Street Fighter II* looked and felt, but how fighting games could look and feel." He wasn't alone in that sentiment, as *Street Fighter II*'s updates were also strong critical and commercial successes. "That said," Peter continues, "I remember thinking, 'Just give me *Street Fighter III* already,' when *Super Street Fighter II* was released." He speaks for a vocal section of the community in this regard, as there was a suspicion that Capcom had found a cash cow and was milking it. The update idea had worked brilliantly for the arcade market, where an operator could justify expenditure because it would increase the cabinet's longevity. Only the hardcore would fork out the cost of a full-price game for such revisions in the home market, and the updates released to diminishing returns.

In 2004, a final arcade version titled *Hyper Street Fighter II* was released. It featured the ability to choose not only your character, but also the version characteristics applied to them – meaning it was possible to pit *Champion Edition* Ryu against *Hyper Fighting* Sagat, for example. The last new revision was *Super Street Fighter II Turbo HD Remix*, which added new HD visuals and a remixed soundtrack, as well as a rebalanced mode with simpler control inputs. "It was surprising as the sentiment within the competitive scene was that although *SSFII Turbo* was rather imbalanced (Old Sagat was quite strong) they kind of accepted it and were still finding ways to fight the character well up to *SSFII: HDR*'s release," says Peter. "That said, seeing as how *HDR* had a brand-new look, it would've been weird if the game did not also have a different re-balance."



Vega

SPECIAL MOVES

(CE) Rolling Crystal Flash:
← (Hold), →

(CE) Flying Barcelona Attack:
↓ (Hold), ↑ then

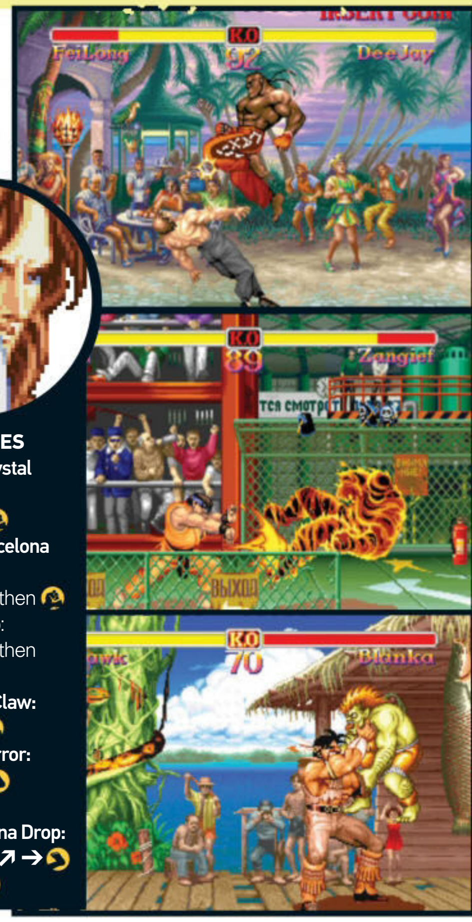
(CE) Izuna Drop:
↓ (Hold), ↑ then
← or →

(SU) Sky High Claw:
↓ (Hold), ↑

(ST) Scarlet Terror:
↙ (Hold), →

SUPER MOVE

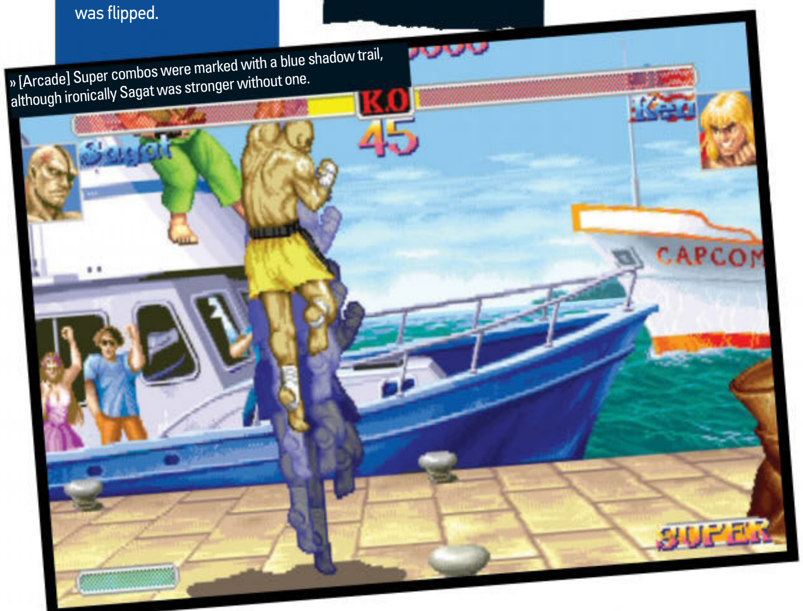
(ST) Rolling Izuna Drop:
↙ (Hold), ↘ ↙ ↗ →
then ← / →



Street Fighter II's commercial impact is hard to overstate. Both Capcom and operators made major money from the game, as a competitive scene gave rise to tournaments and a competitive scene, the legacy of which can be seen in today's eSports scene and tournaments like the Evo Championship Series.

Of course, success breeds imitators. "Developers saw the impact *Street Fighter II* was having, and it wasn't long before the competition got tough," recalls Mark, "especially with franchises such as *Mortal Kombat*, *The King Of Fighters* and *Tekken* all out by 1994, and all looking to claim the competitive fighting game genre in the arcades." By that point every major arcade manufacturer had jumped on the fighting bandwagon and Capcom felt that some imitators were getting a bit close for comfort. In particular, Capcom took Data East to court over *Fighter's History*, alleging that it had copied fighting styles, appearances and control schemes from *Street Fighter II*. However, the court concluded that many of the similarities between the two games were not protected under copyright law, and that *Fighter's History* had not sufficiently infringed upon those that were.

However, it was certainly possible to carve out a place in the fighting market.



» [Arcade] Super combos were marked with a blue shadow trail, although ironically Sagat was stronger without one.



» [Arcade] With teleportation, air fireballs and insane power, Akuma was a devilish boss.

“The game was balanced, and improved on the limitations of its predecessor”

Mark Starkey



DEE JAY

SPECIAL MOVES
(SU) Air Slasher:
← (Hold), →
(SU) Double Rolling Sobat:
← (Hold), →
(SU) Machine Gun Upper:
↓ (Hold), ↑, then (tap)
(ST) Jackknife Maximum:
↓ (Hold), ↑
SUPER MOVE
(ST) Sobat Carnival:
← (Hold), → ← →

The important thing, as Michael notes, was to offer something that *Street Fighter II* didn't. “I think *Eternal Champions* always started with a deep story as the focus. Prior to this, no fighting game had focused on that aspect,” he explains. “Given that *Eternal Champions* wasn't an arcade port I also focused to make sure the single-player was rewarded. Training modes and all the various storyline outcomes were designed to reward those players as much as the head to head modes.” This paid off for Michael and his team, as the game achieved strong sales despite a crowded Mega Drive fighting market. Indeed, every competitor offered a unique hook, be it the realistic digitised sprites and copious gore of *Mortal Kombat*, the dynamic sprite scaling of SNK's games or the 3D visuals of games like *Virtua Fighter*. However, most games adopted aspects of *Street Fighter II* in return, with the combo system being the most notable.

In the home, *Street Fighter II* was big business, with almost every platform receiving at least one of the game's versions. However, special mention has to be made of *Street Fighter II*'s impact as a third-party killer app for Nintendo – the SNES version was the first home conversion on the market when it arrived in the summer of 1992, and fans of the arcade machine flocked to the console as a result. Nintendo was particularly keen to trumpet the fact that it had the only conversion of the game, memorably placing a full page advert stating “Sega owners… dream on.” in the debut issue of *Mean Machines Sega*.

Although other versions did arrive later and some of them were very good, the game always had the strongest association with Nintendo's hardware. In fact, of the 36 million *Street Fighter* games that have been sold to date, roughly a third of those are different versions of *Street Fighter II* on the Super Nintendo – six million of the original, four million of *Street Fighter II Turbo* and two million of *Super Street Fighter II*. For comparison, *Street Fighter II: Special Champion Edition* on the Mega Drive sold 1.65 million copies and *Super Street Fighter II* failed to crack a million.



M. BISON

SPECIAL MOVES
(CE) Psycho Crusher:
← (Hold), →
(CE) Double Knee Press:
← (Hold), →
(CE) Head Press:
↓ (Hold), ↑
(CE) Somersault Skull Diver:
(After Head Press)
(SU) Devil Reverse:
↓ (Hold), ↑
SUPER MOVE
(ST) Knee Press Nightmare:
← (Hold), → ← →

While updates had provided diminishing returns over *Street Figher II*'s lifetime, they had kept the game relevant for years and encouraged a thriving player base. Capcom would continue using updates in this way as a result, putting out a variety of revised versions of *Street Fighter III* and *Street Fighter IV*. Other developers also adopted the use of interim updates in their own fighting games, with some proving just as prolific as Capcom – for example, Arc System Works produced five revisions of *Guilty Gear XX*. However, the end of this business model may be in sight as Capcom abandoned the practice for *Street Fighter V*, which will rely on rolling DLC instead.

For Capcom, the success of *Street Fighter II* was transformative – not only did the company create further *Street Fighter* sequels, it began to ▶

STAT FIGHTER

The tale of the tape on Capcom's prize fighter

7
Games in the *Street Fighter II* series

65
Character variations available in *Hyper Street Fighter II*

£1000
The amount of earnings a *Street Fighter II* (UK) cabinet could bring in

22.4 billion Yen
The revenue from *Street Fighter II: Champion Edition* sales in Japan alone

24
Number of platforms that received an official version of a *Street Fighter II* series game

200,000
Estimated number of *Street Fighter II* cabinets operated in Mexico

0
Number of *Street Fighter II* cabinets Capcom sold to Mexican operators

17
Unique characters in *Street Fighter II* series

22 Years
How long *Street Fighter II* held the record for best-selling Capcom game

8 Frames
Least forgiving input time limit for a Shoryuken in *Super Street Fighter II Turbo*

15 Frames
Most forgiving input time limit for a Shoryuken in *Super Street Fighter II Turbo*



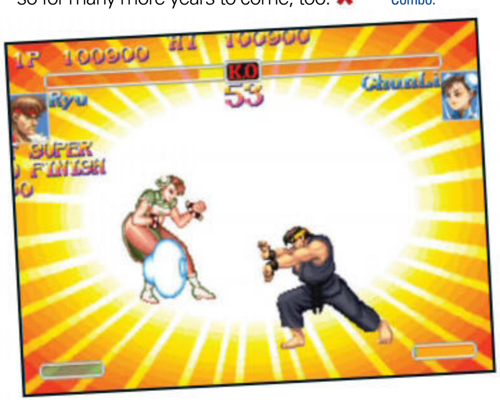
▶ gear its arcade output heavily towards fighting games. This peaked in 1998, when seven of Capcom's nine arcade releases were fighting games – and four of those featured Ryu, in a prequel (*Street Fighter Alpha 3*), a sequel (*Street Fighter III 2nd Impact*), a spin-off (*Street Fighter EX2*) and a crossover (*Marvel Vs Capcom*). This persisted until the decline of fighting games around the turn of the century, but the company also takes the credit for the genre's revival with *Street Fighter IV*.

Street Fighter II reshaped a genre, and its influence continues to be felt today . "With many things popular today, there is heritage. *Star Wars, Final Fantasy*, *James Bond*, *Shenmue*, take your pick," says Mark. "There will always be people who will be curious about the roots of something they fall in love with, and with *Street Fighter V* on the horizon, *Street Fighter* is as popular as ever."

But while *Street Fighter V* drives renewed interest in the series, what truly marks *Street Fighter II* out as a stunning sequel is that the staff of the new games often refer back to it. "One of the things that made *Street Fighter II* stand out was that anyone could walk up and hit buttons and leave satisfied," says Peter. "When designing *SFV*, that was one of our core design pillars."

"I suppose we've been inspired by that game all along in how we develop the series," says Ono. "Most game series have new sequels which build upon the design of the previous titles, but *Street Fighter II* really started over from what was created in the original *Street Fighter*. When it came time to move to *Street Fighter III* and Street *Fighter IV*, we really started from scratch each time," the producer elaborates. "It was *Street Fighter II* that started this pattern in motion and now, as I've said many times, *Street Fighter V* is another reset of the game and brings a new roster and new design. So you could say that what *Street Fighter II* did over 20 years ago – wait, it's almost 30 years now! – has continued to influence us."

We get the feeling it'll continue to do so for many more years to come, too. *



» [Arcade] This beautiful sunburst is your reward for knocking out an opponent with a Super Combo.



CAMMY

SPECIAL MOVES
(SU) Spiral Arrow:
↓↘→
(SU) Cannon Spike:
→↓↘
(SU) Axle Spin Knuckle:
←↙↓↘→
(ST) Hooligan Combination:
↙↓↘→↗ then
(ST) Fatal Leg Twister:
← (Hold), → (after Hooligan Combination, near head)
(ST) Cross Scissor Pressure:
← (Hold), → (after Hooligan Combination, near body)
SUPER MOVE
(ST) Spin Drive Smasher:
↓↘→↓↘

CONVERSION CAPERS

We take a look at all the ports of Capcom's arcade smash hit



MEGA DRIVE

■ As with the PC Engine version, this is a port of *Champion Edition*, however, it also adds *Turbo* content. The three-button pad is usable (you use Start to switch between punches and kicks) but special moves are harder to pull off compared to the superior SNES controller. Plug a six-button pad in, though, and it's virtually on par with *Super Street Fighter II Turbo* on SNES.



SUPER NINTENDO

■ Its been superseded by later SNES *Street Fighter* ports, but the original conversion still holds up surprisingly well. It's very close to the arcade game in style (although there is a lot of missing content) and the controls are tight and responsive without the need for extra pads. Little wonder it was deemed the definitive home version of the game upon release.



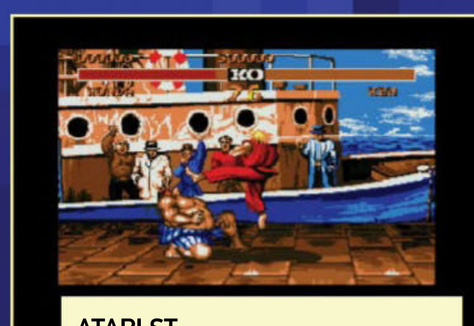
T. HAWK

SPECIAL MOVES
(SU) Condor Dive:
(In air) (All)
(SU) Tomahawk Buster:
→↓↘
(SU) Mexican Typhoon:
(360)
SUPER MOVE
(ST) Double Typhoon:
2x(360)



ZX SPECTRUM

■ The Spectrum version looks great, but it's saddled by an astonishingly bad multi-load system. Like the other 8-bit ports it does cater for two-button sticks, but the base version — fire and forward for punch and fire and back for kick — is very hard to use.



ATARI ST

■ The Atari ST version suffers from all the same issues as the Amiga but manages to be even worse. The animation is particularly bad and the game is slower than its Amiga counterpart. It's slightly easier to pull off special moves, but it's still a poor port.



COMMODORE 64

■ The C64 version is quick, but that's pretty much all it has going for it. It's a buggy version of the game, with frequent odd pauses during play. Worse still, your characters occasionally get stuck on the backgrounds.



FEI LONG

SPECIAL MOVES

(SU) Rekka Ken:
↓↘→ (perform up to 3 times)

(SU) Shien Kyaku:
←↓↙

(ST) Rekku Kyaku:
↙↓↘→↗

(ST) Shuu Kubi Raku:
←→(M/H) (in air)

SUPER MOVE

(ST) Rekka Shinken:
↓↘→↓↘→



SHARP X68000

■ This is another *Champion Edition* port and is virtually arcade perfect, with only slightly different music. Control-wise it had the same issues are other home computers, but that's solved with a joystick adaptor. The only thing that ruins it is the constant swapping between four disks on certain systems.



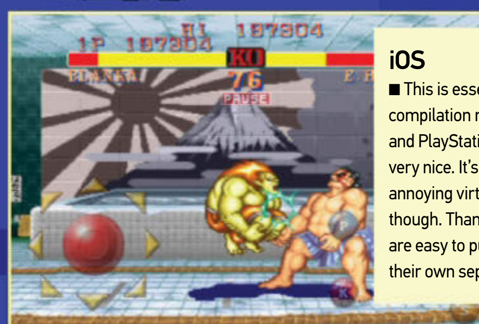
PC ENGINE

■ When you consider the machine, this is a truly astonishing port and in some ways more impressive than the SNES version. It's rubbish to play with a standard pad, but luckily there's the option for six-button support.

DOS

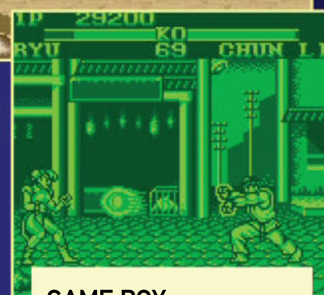
■ The DOS version looks good, and it miles better looking that its Amiga and Atari ST counterparts. Even the animation is decent, although the music is nothing to write home about. It's still ruined by a clunky control system.





iOS

■ This is essentially the compilation released on Saturn and PlayStation, meaning it looks very nice. It's let down by the annoying virtual buttons and stick, though. Thankfully special moves are easy to pull off as they have their own separate buttons.



GAME BOY

■ This is a weird hodgepodge edition of games up to *Super Street Fighter II Turbo*. It's very well detailed for a Game Boy game with great looking sprites. It's missing Dhalsim, Vega and E. Honda and only has two buttons. Cleverly though, it changes the strength of kicks and punches based on how long you press the buttons for.



AMIGA

■ Despite some odd colouring the Amiga version looks authentic. But that falls apart once you see it moving, due to jerky animation and poor scrolling. Musically it's terrible, and it's hampered by the same poor control system found on the 8-bit conversions.

XBOX, PSP, PS2

■ These are emulated versions of the arcade versions. PS2 and Xbox owners want *Capcom Classics Collection Volume 1* with *Street Fighter II*, *Champion Edition* and *Street Fighter II Turbo: Hyper Fighting*. PSP owners need *Capcom Classics Collection Reloaded*.





AKUMA

SPECIAL MOVES

(ST) Gou Hadoken:
↓↘→

(ST) Zankuu Hadoken:
↓↘→ (in air)

(ST) Shakunetsu Hadoken:
←↙↓↘→

(ST) Gou Shoryuken:
→↓↘

(ST) Tatsumaki Zankukyaku:
↓↙←

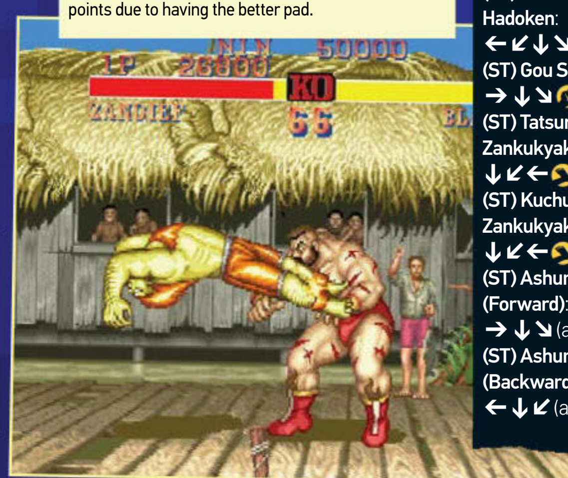
(ST) Kuchu Tatsumaki Zankukyaku:
↓↙← (in air)

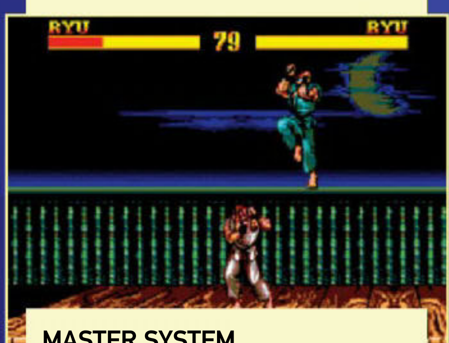
(ST) Ashura Senku (Forward):
→↓↘ (all) or

(ST) Ashura Senku (Backward):
←↓↙ (all) or

PLAYSTATION/SATURN

■ As you'd expect, the versions released on *Capcom's Street Fighter II* and *Capcom Generations* collections are near perfect, with the Saturn ports winning bonus points due to having the better pad.





MASTER SYSTEM

■ Based on *Champion Edition*, Master System *Street Fighter II* is clearly cut-down. Dhalsim, Zangief, E. Honda and Vega are missing. It's graphically impressive and has authentic tunes, but is let down by a distinct lack of buttons and poor controls.



MOBILE

■ While the graphics are accurate, it's stiff and sluggish to play, and playing on a keypad makes it incredibly difficult to pull off special moves. An impressive effort, but a poor game.

Scooby Doo

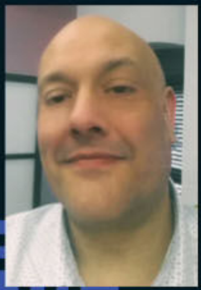
When Elite couldn't squeeze their Scooby-Doo cartoon into a Spectrum they asked Gargoyle Games for an alternative. Developers from both firms tell Rory Milne how Scooby ended up in a frantic platformer

By the mid-Eighties, Elite Systems' co-founders, Richard and Steve Wilcox, were no strangers to licence-based videogames. In fact, their West Midlands operation had thrived on working with licences from their first release onwards. But Richard remembers *Scooby-Doo* representing far more to him than just a licensing opportunity. "God, I loved the *Scooby* cartoons. I still do, they're probably my favourite of all time. Not quite sure who had the idea of licensing *Scooby*. It's highly likely that I would have suggested it, but Steve would have done the deal. He was very good at tracking down who owned the rights and getting the licences even though the TV and film companies weren't attuned to merchandising and rights exploitation like they are today."

Once Steve had secured the *Scooby* licence, however, brother Richard took the lead on designing a game that would do justice to his favourite cartoon. "When it came to what the *Scooby* game would be the design really fell to me. I was never a great programmer and only a very mediocre designer of graphics, but I wasn't a bad games designer. I was methodical and structured even



» Richard Wilcox has been in video production for 20 years and runs his own company.



» Jon Harrison is the director of a small studio focused on web, design and app work.





» [ZX Spectrum] Scooby's mission to free his friends begins by punching a few ghosts in the face!

back in those days when the idea of creating a game design document before starting coding was alien. The ambitions for *Scooby* were enormous. Even though it would sell because of the licence, I wanted it to be a great game in its own right. The prototype was Don Bluth's *Dragon's Lair*, something that looked as good as any cartoon but was interactive. To me, it seemed that if we could at least distil some of the elements of that then we might have a chance of telling a real *Scooby* story, and make something that felt at least a little bit like an episode of the show."

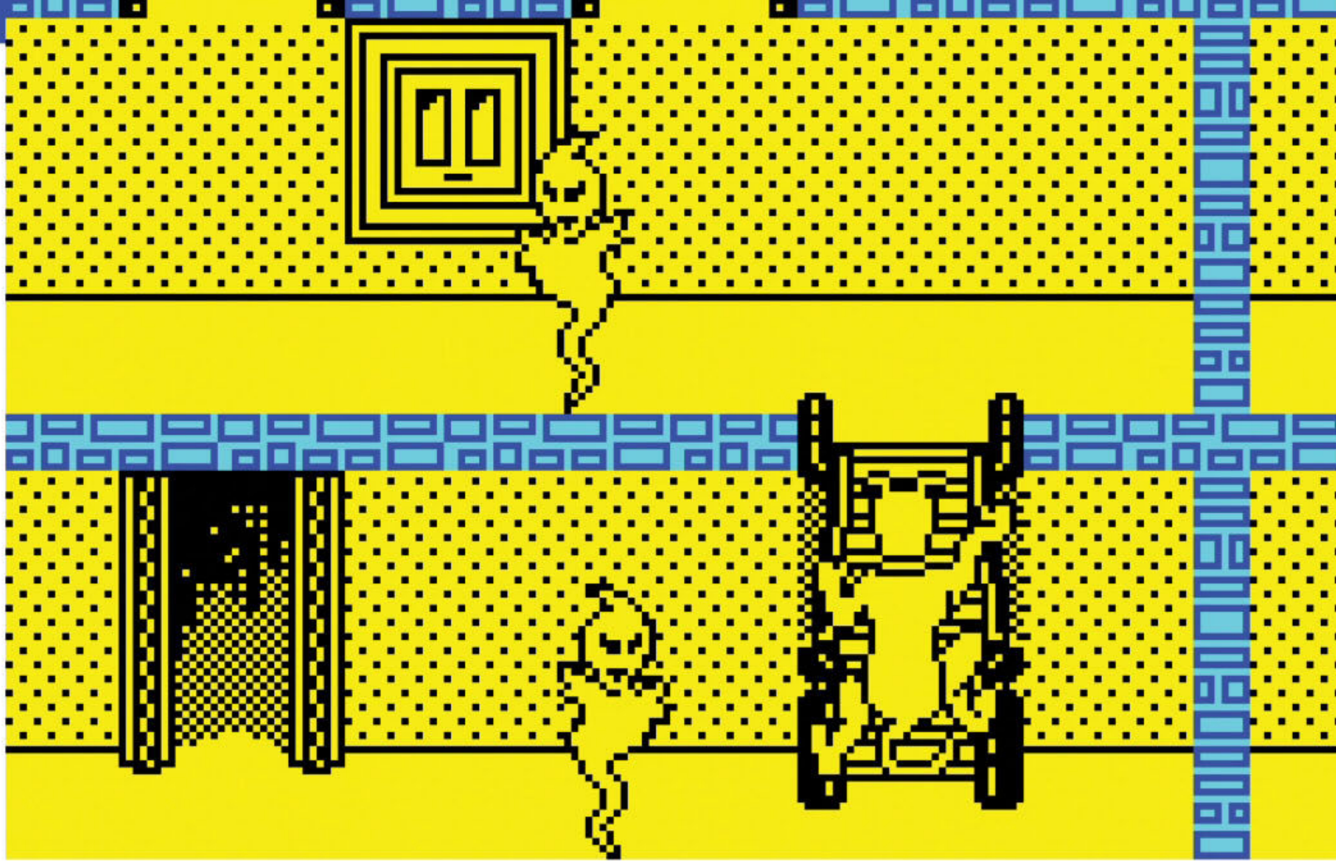
Of course, Don Bluth's interactive cartoon was stored on spacious LaserDiscs while Richard and his team had to fit their project into the Spectrum's comparatively meagre RAM chip. "The big difference between that game and ours would be the hardware. Theirs was pulling the animation off LaserDisc. We just had 48K of RAM in which to cram all of our animations. In our defence, we gave it a pretty good shot. I came up with what these days you might call a 'game engine' that allowed us to define and run interactive scenes. It was pretty darn powerful and allowed you to create mini-games that were extremely varied. The really clever thing was that you didn't need to code each mini-game separately; we had developed a scene designer tool, which allowed you to do the layout and define the interactivity. This tool then encoded the levels in such a way that they could be played back in real time. Andy Williams did the coding. He was Elite's number one programmer and, of course, he nailed it. But what killed us was the graphics. I hadn't accounted for just how much animation we would need and how long it would take and ultimately how much memory it would need… memory that, of course, the Spectrum didn't have."

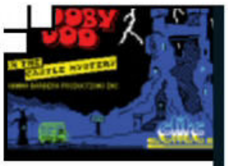
Elite's Jon Harrison has memories of the *Scooby-Doo* art team making great progress on the game's visuals before a press visit gave them cause for concern. "We pretty much designed 80 per cent of the game. I'd even thought as far ahead as the loading screen. I know I'd filled over 40 Microdrives with graphics. I had a stack over a foot and half sellotaped together – I think they are still in my loft along with a lot of other game memorabilia. I remember the



SCOOBY-DOO 101

■ It has no intensive platforming – there are occasional stairs to climb and gaps to jump, it has no intensive opponents – foes are defeated with single jabs. But *Scooby-Doo* is certainly intense and ensures a constant state of fight or flight by throwing multiple hazards at the player from close range.





IN THE KNOW

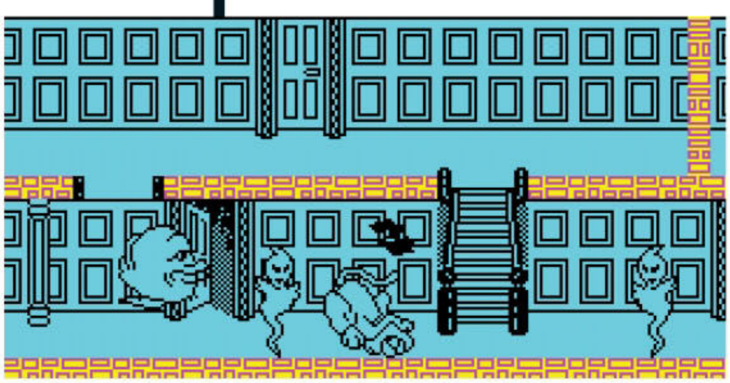
» PUBLISHER: Elite Systems
» DEVELOPER: Gargoyle Games
» RELEASED: 1986
» PLATFORM: Various
» GENRE: Platformer





» [ZX Spectrum] A moment's indecision allows two ghosts to spawn above and below a mid-level Scooby.

» [ZX Spectrum] As well as ghoulish opponents on each side, some levels see Scooby attacked from above.



Crash team coming to do an article, taking a photo and us discussing it after. We'd played a couple of demo sequences and I think the penny was dropping that we'd filled 48K with just those. But both Gary and I kept on drawing. Every pixel was plotted with a Kempston joystick."

As concerns over *Scooby-Doo*'s graphics increased, Jon recalls compression and a Microdrive release being discussed, multi-loads not being considered and, finally, Elite's *Scooby* gang splitting up. "Multiple loads on cassettes? I think people would have killed us! We were so ambitious it was crazy; each scene was a mini-film. It needed so much in terms of graphics, and although we could make the backgrounds minimal we just kept going overboard on the characters – okay, I did. We had an opening scene in a castle room. Scooby was asleep on a windowsill, Shaggy in the bed. Full screen – both snoring – bang, there's 48K gone. Next load. Trap door opens, Scooby falls down. Next load. And so on… We thought the code could compress things, but it just couldn't handle it. We thought Microdrives would be popular, but it never happened. Then we started to get pulled on to other projects. I started work on *Paperboy C64*, Gary left to join Gremlin Graphics, Andy left, Rich left to pursue other options so *Scooby* just fizzled out."

After moving on, Richard Wilcox realised that his ambitious project had simply been conceived too early, but he reveals that its time may now have come. "It was ahead of its time. A few years down the line when art teams were much bigger and machines had more memory we would have got there. I still don't think there's been a game that has combined the best elements of cartoons and games."

Back in early-1986, however, Elite held the rights to publish a much-publicised *Scooby-Doo* title but lacked a completed game. Steve Wilcox's solution was to use the licence to close a deal he had been chasing. "Elite always had a very simple way of doing things. Acquire the rights to a great arcade game, TV show, film etc and then find the best developer – usually one working on original games rather than well-known names. Gargoyle Games already had a reputation as a fine developer and had the additional benefit of being local. Elite had courted Gargoyle for some time. When the opportunity to work on *Scooby-Doo* came along it was one we just couldn't miss."



Elite artist Jon Harrison's recollections of Gargoyle's *Scooby-Doo* takeover are that the

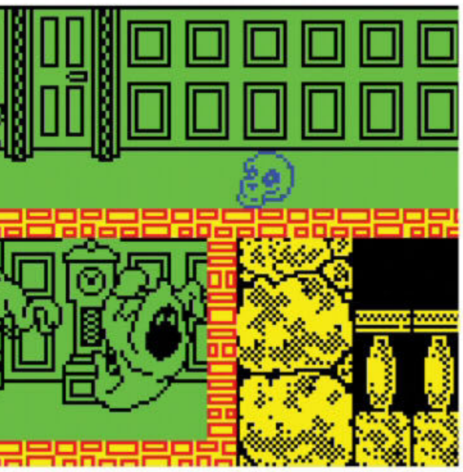
» [ZX Spectrum] A close encounter with a ghoulish foe sends Scooby comically tumbling around the screen.



original *Scooby* team were too busy for regrets. Jon even jokes about it all now. "We'd all moved on and *Scooby* was a dead project by the time we found out Gargoyle had been asked to take it over. I still show people what we wanted to achieve back then. Now it would be 100 people doing a groundbreaking game. Back then it was four teenagers with two Spectrums, a partially working joystick and half an A4 pad. Classic."

Unlike *Scooby-Doo* episodes, the early development of Gargoyle's take on the animated mutt remains a mystery, but Gargoyle artist Stuart Cox describes the mid-point of its creation as being fast-paced without being overly stressful. "It was my first game there at what turned out to be a really great place to work. There were only five of us developing, so





we were a very close-knit team. I was 17 and working in the games industry. What wasn't to love? I joined the company right in the middle of *Scooby-Doo*, but even before Gargoyle, I'd obviously seen the PR, adverts from Elite. I wasn't at the company when the deal was struck for us to take over the creation of *Scooby*, so can't really comment on that part, but certainly I didn't feel any pressure from the 'gravity' of the licence. Obviously it was a famous name, but licensing in the industry was new in those days. We did have to turn it around quickly though."

In order to speedily satisfy the demand created by Elite's project, coder Mark Haden worked with Gargoyle co-founder Roy Carter to adapt designs drafted by Roy's partner Greg Follis into on-screen gameplay. "We were told to develop something quickly for Elite. I was helping Roy to code the Spectrum version and in charge of the Amstrad conversion. Greg did all the game design, [it] remained unchanged from his original conception. Elite didn't have much input, its only concern was getting something that partly filled the brief of the original game to the market as quickly as possible. Roy and Greg had a good understanding of each other, so translation into gameplay was done verbally between them. I would describe it as an iterative cycle; it would be developed, refined and redeveloped."

The experience of Gargoyle's co-founders ensured smooth progress on their *Scooby-Doo* project, which Stuart describes as a product of evolution rather than planning. "Greg and Roy were exceptional at what they did. Even in those mid-development stages of the game it was already shaping up to be highly playable. A lot of the design had already taken place. However, we never worked to a tightly annotated form, preferring a more free-form type of development – we used to play it constantly and adapt many times."

As well as experience, Roy Carter had accumulated a library of adaptable routines during his years of coding games. Mark explains how these sped up *Scooby-Doo*'s development. "We used Amstrad PCW's to do most of the development, using a CP/M compiler and serial interface to download directly to the Speccy. Very little was developed from scratch. All the source code from the previous games was hanging around so it was just a case of copying and pasting a lot of the time; we used quite sophisticated text editors."





The processes used to create the art for *Scooby-Doo* were equally well established with Stuart Cox favouring digital over analogue tools. "We had an in-house package we called 'Bin Image' that I used and a Spectrum Melbourne House art program for [the] loading screen. Graph paper was used sometimes; Greg favoured that method while I usually just pushed and pulled at pixels until they looked right. It's hard to imagine nowadays that you could only have two colours in any one area – on the Spectrum, at least – and the resolutions were very low in those days. Greg had fleshed out a large number of the basic *Scooby-Doo* visuals already, and I was tasked with continuing that work and converting the graphics to the Amstrad, creating stuff like loading screens, title screens, side bar images, fonts, and so on."

In order to make best use of available memory, Greg and Stuart cleverly



» [ZX Spectrum] Skulls aren't deadly, but they do require Scooby to jump over them to make progress.



» [ZX Spectrum] *Scooby-Doo* has eight levels, which loop providing Scooby doesn't fall down on the job!

> **"The ambitions for Scooby were enormous. Even though it would sell because of the licence, I wanted it to be a great game in its own right"**
>
> Elite's Richard Wilcox

CONVERSION CAPERS

How the other versions of Scooby-Doo compare



AMSTRAD

■ Although very slightly slower than the original, the Amstrad version of *Scooby-Doo* delivers better sound effects and a more colourful cast of characters. This allows Scooby and his foes to better stand out against their backgrounds, which makes responding to threats that much easier. Otherwise, the Amstrad CPC *Scooby* plays exactly like the Spectrum game it's based on.



C64

■ The more muted colours and blocky characters of the C64 *Scooby-Doo* are understandable given the system's differing hardware set-up, but its stripped-back gameplay is less so. C64 *Scooby* has four levels versus eight in the original, and there aren't any ground or overhead hazards. It does play a decent rendition of the *Scooby-Doo* theme tune, however.



C16/PLUS/4

■ Designed for the minimal memory of the Commodore 16 rather than the Plus/4's more accommodating RAM, this dual-platform port discards more of the original's gameplay than the C64 version and has less colourful, less defined levels and graphics than C64 *Scooby-Doo*. It just about captures the spirit of the original, but a Plus/4-specific port would have felt less diminished.



CRACKING COMPUTER CARTOONS

More great cartoon-based games

MICKEY MOUSE

■ Gremlin Graphics' stylish platformer sees Mickey vertically assaulting four towers of a haunted castle dispatching ghosts and ogres with a water pistol and rubber mallet. Certain castle levels provide exits to mini-games, which have to be aced in order to exorcise each tower.

ATOM ANT

■ An obscure game based on an obscure licence, *Atom Ant* shares much in common with *Bomb Jack* whilst playing nothing like it. The objective is to collect and defuse bombs from outside vertically-scrolling buildings while avoiding hazards and accumulating power-ups.

YOGI'S GREAT ESCAPE

■ Seemingly short on gameplay on first inspection, prolonged play soon reveals *Yogi's Great Escape* to be a pure platformer. There are collectibles, but they don't affect your progress, which frees you to focus on timing, judging spaces between platforms and avoiding hazards.

SCOOBY AND SCRAPPY-DOO

■ In many ways this is Hi-Tec's spiritual successor to *Yogi*, although *Scrappy-Doo* offers more sophisticated visuals. The main gameplay tweaks are that Scrappy can defend himself with a short-range jab and collect Scooby Snacks to gain extra lives.

THE JETSONS

■ Unusually for a Hi-Tec Hanna-Barbera title, *The Jetsons* is an arcade adventure rather than a shooter, brawler or platformer. The game's focus is on logistical puzzles rather than cryptic ones, and controlling different Jetsons per level ensures that the game stays fresh while avoiding frustration.

POTSWORTH & CO

■ One of the best Hanna-Barbera games is adapted from one of its least-remembered shows. *Potsworth* takes influences from console platformers and it requires you to guide the cartoon's heroes through five sprawling stages in order to find an array lost objects.







» [ZX Spectrum] Scooby spies Shaggy trapped behind a wall and must backtrack in order to free him.



» [ZX Spectrum] Our canine hero pauses to take down a bouncing oddity before apprehending a mad scientist.



» [ZX Spectrum] A monstrous foe descends to a lower level, but Scooby is prepared for his assault.



» [ZX Spectrum] Boxes marked 'S' are Scooby Snacks, collecting them provides Scoob with extra lives.



» [ZX Spectrum] Mad scientists have imprisoned Velma in a jar, but Scooby is seconds from freeing her.

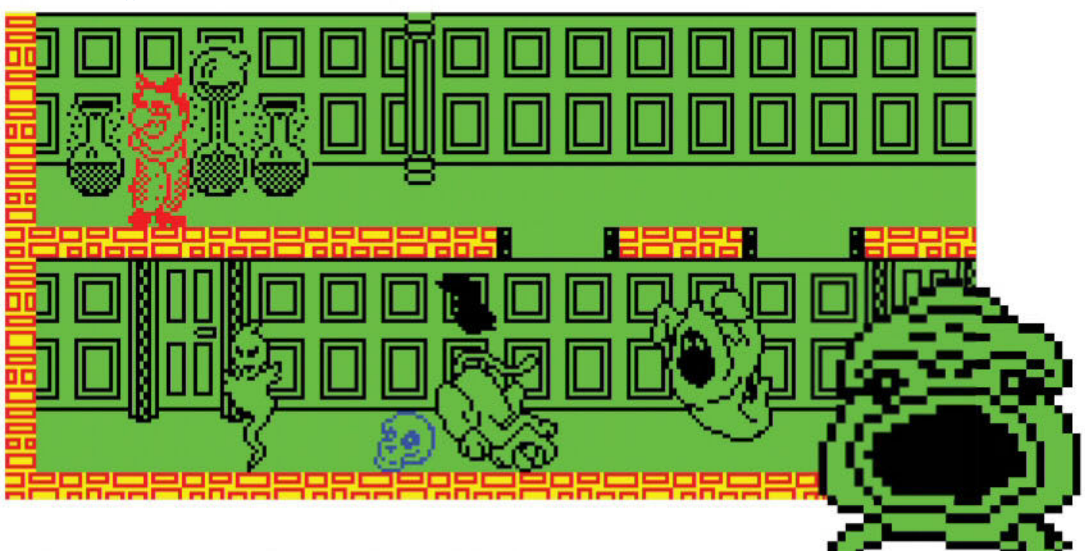
recycled some of *Scooby-Doo*'s graphics. Stuart was also tasked with translating Greg's graph paper level designs into hexadecimal code. "We did a lot of tricks to minimise the memory usage. I remember working on the suit of armour on the background walls – it is only one half, with the other half 'mirror-generated' by the code. We had to be clever with graphics and would often design them in such a way that we could use them in other areas. All level design was done by hand, in the traditional way. I think they were loosely mapped out on paper beforehand; this would have been Greg so it is likely. I also remember working out hex values [for] the map creation – line by line."

On the format and genre chosen for *Scooby-Doo*, Stuart cites familiarity and expediency as guiding factors. He puts the game's multi-directional foes and static combat down to an early decision to implement arcade-hard gameplay. "There were other games around at the time that had that side-on look; I'd guess that Greg and Roy would have gone for that design for good reason. We had little time to develop it so making an adventure game would have been out of the question. The game was meant to be frantic, so danger from all directions was intended. It was meant to be an all-out arcade game. The 'standing still' aspect was there from day one; I certainly don't remember ever being able to fight while on the move."

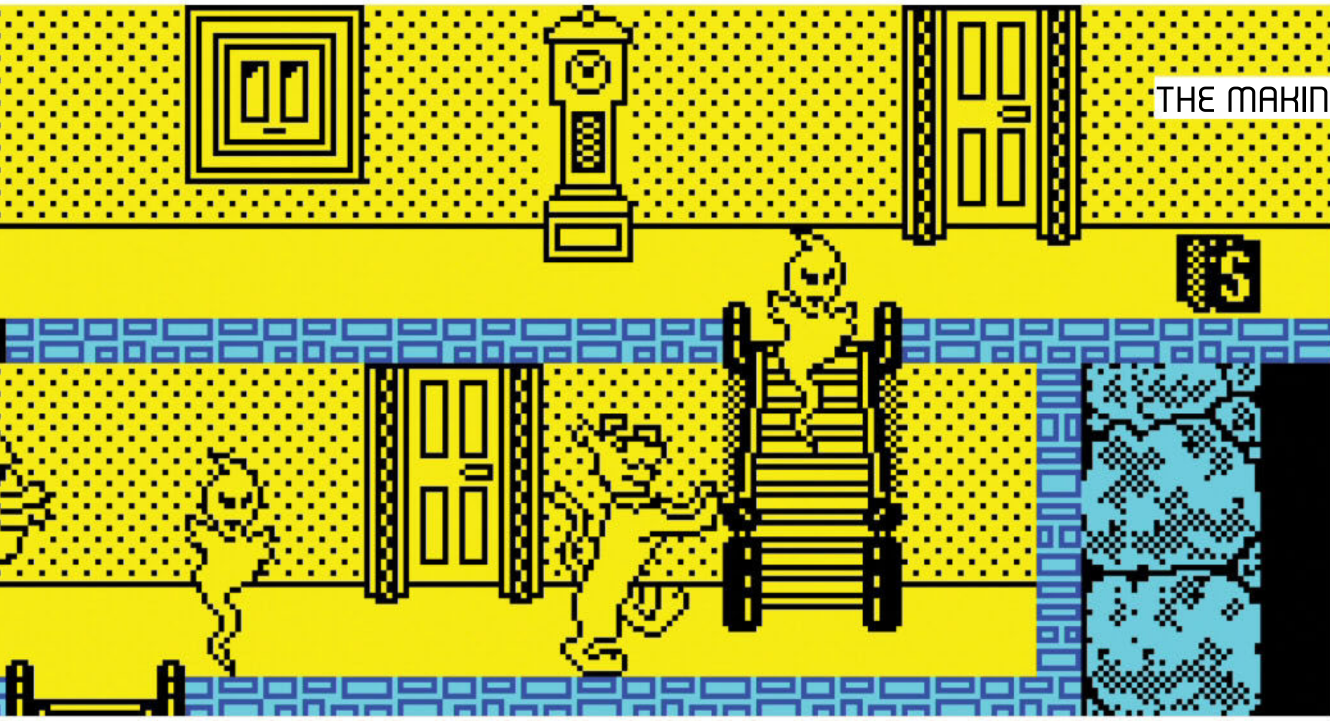
One of *Scooby-Doo*'s more interesting mechanics was created by employing split-screen stages, which signposted dangers in upper levels. By contrast, Scooby's opponents would attack from both sides at close-quarters without warning, which, as Stuart reveals, was entirely intentional. "The sneak-peak aspect was a really nice feature; it added an extra dimension, it allowed for forward planning and strategy. The frantic gameplay was all about putting the player right on the edge of collapse.

> **"The game was meant to be frantic, so danger from all directions was intended. It was meant to be an all-out arcade game"**
>
> Gargoyle's Stuart Cox

» [ZX Spectrum] After rescuing his friends, Scooby has to round up the scientists who kidnapped them.







» [ZX Spectrum] Good timing is essential to keeping Scooby safe from foes that attack in numbers.

The seemingly impossible situation the player was in and then surviving it gave great satisfaction.... or a smashed TV screen in some cases I am sure!"

The difficulty of Gargoyle's *Scooby-Doo* was gauged by Mark, who playtested the game before it was shown to Elite for approval. "The feedback did come from either myself or Roy. We didn't think it was difficult. I was the major game tester, so maybe I just played too much! Developing on the Speccy was quite quick with a good library of routines on hand; the whole start to finish took around 12 weeks. Gargoyle was paid a fixed sum to get something to market that Elite was happy with, so commercially just delivering was considered a success."

The reception of Gargoyle's *Scooby-Doo* was uniformly good despite comments that the game didn't play like *Dragon's Lair* as had been advertised. "I think the criticism was fair; it was never going to fulfil the hype generated by Elite," Mark acknowledges. Stuart agrees and explains why the game was successful anyway: "There was always going to be a bit of a story around *Scooby-Doo* because of Elite's failed start, but it really was a fun arcade game. It also looked like the cartoon, so I was pretty sure that anyone playing it would enjoy it." Elite artist Jon Harrison offers a balanced assessment of the game, "I wont deny it hurt a little as the game that came out was so simple – but it came out, so fair play to the guys at Gargoyle."

As well as the Spectrum original, Gargoyle also developed the Amstrad version of *Scooby-Doo*, which as Mark points out was a process of taking the rough with the smooth. "The worst case with porting Speccy games to the Amstrad was the screen code, 32vs40 columns, and the fact updating was slower because of the increased size of the screen RAM. [But] you could do some quite nice masking on the Amstrad that you couldn't do on the Speccy."

A C64 conversion and a dual-system port for the C16 and Plus/4 followed, but Stuart credits these versions to other developers. "We didn't create the C16 or Plus/4 conversion; I think Elite contracted that out to someone else. I would guess we'd have given them access to all the graphics, though. I'm pretty sure we didn't do the C64 version either."

Reflecting on *Scooby-Doo* now, Mark Haden offers an honest appraisal of the platformer that he worked on nearly 30 years ago. "It's a good game; it's a bit 'samey' but all development was done for the Speccy and there's only so much possible in 48K!"

A quick trip online to revisit his game helps inform Stuart Cox's final thoughts on his first game for Gargoyle and the title that ended the long-wait for Elite's *Scooby-Doo*. "I've just had a look at a 'playthrough' on YouTube – it does seems to hold up quite well. Scooby looks like Scooby, and it's paced just about right. It was turned around in double-quick time, so on the whole I think it worked well. It could be brutal sometimes, though, so maybe a few extra Scooby Snacks scattered around for extra lives might have balanced out some of the unforgiving sudden appearances of ghosts! But if people still look back on it fondly then that's very nice indeed." *

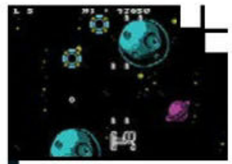


Thanks to Richard Wilcox, Jon Harrison, Steve Wilcox, Stuart Cox and Mark Haden.

SCOOBY-DOO AND THE ATTIC MYSTERY!

Could Elite's interactive Scooby cartoon finally get released?

Like all classic *Scooby-Doo* cartoons, the story of Elite's cancelled *Scooby* game ends with a revelation. The ambitious project may have stalled decades ago, but project leader Richard Wilcox feels the idea could be kickstarted – especially since artist Jon Harrison has kept all his work for the game. "I think all the Microdrives do still work," Jon reveals. "I kept loads. My wife says I'm a hoarder – I call it free loft insulation! I don't have a Microdrive anymore, unfortunately – but I would like to get hold of one just to see the content again." Of course, having the assets to resurrect the project is one thing, but there's also the small matter of securing the rights to *Scooby-Doo* and finding a publisher. Could Elite's Steve Wilcox be the perfect man for both jobs? Well he's more focused on promoting Gargoyle's *Scooby-Doo* at present, but he at least seems open to the idea. "You can play Gargoyle's version of *Scooby-Doo* on modern devices with the recently launched Recreated ZX Spectrum," Steve explains. "Though we do still hanker after a conclusion to the ambitious version that Rich, Andy and co worked on … perhaps they'll get it crowdfunded."



DEVELOPER HIGHLIGHTS

LIGHT FORCE
(PICTURED)
SYSTEM: Various
YEAR: 1986

HYDROFOOL
SYSTEM: Various
YEAR: 1987

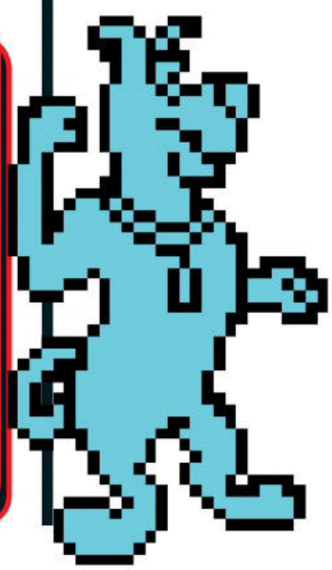
THUNDERCATS
SYSTEM: Various
YEAR: 1987



» Stuart Cox runs his own IT business and has recently started getting into retro gaming.



» Mark Haden operates a bespoke software firm developing high quality plug-ins.



287:

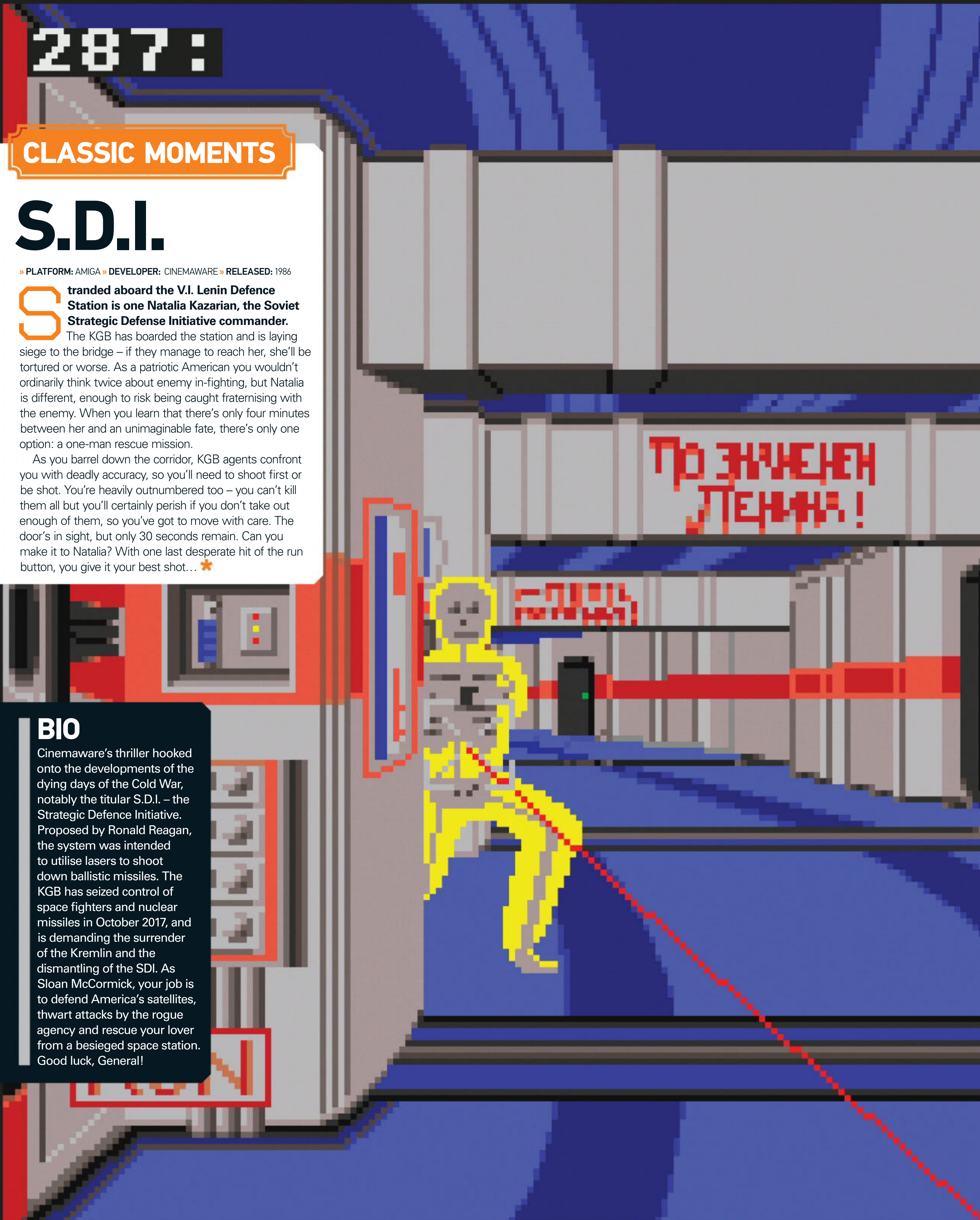
CLASSIC MOMENTS

S.D.I.

» **PLATFORM:** AMIGA » **DEVELOPER:** CINEMAWARE » **RELEASED:** 1986

Stranded aboard the V.I. Lenin Defence Station is one Natalia Kazarian, the Soviet Strategic Defense Initiative commander. The KGB has boarded the station and is laying siege to the bridge – if they manage to reach her, she'll be tortured or worse. As a patriotic American you wouldn't ordinarily think twice about enemy in-fighting, but Natalia is different, enough to risk being caught fraternising with the enemy. When you learn that there's only four minutes between her and an unimaginable fate, there's only one option: a one-man rescue mission.

As you barrel down the corridor, KGB agents confront you with deadly accuracy, so you'll need to shoot first or be shot. You're heavily outnumbered too – you can't kill them all but you'll certainly perish if you don't take out enough of them, so you've got to move with care. The door's in sight, but only 30 seconds remain. Can you make it to Natalia? With one last desperate hit of the run button, you give it your best shot… ✱



BIO

Cinemaware's thriller hooked onto the developments of the dying days of the Cold War, notably the titular S.D.I. – the Strategic Defence Initiative. Proposed by Ronald Reagan, the system was intended to utilise lasers to shoot down ballistic missiles. The KGB has seized control of space fighters and nuclear missiles in October 2017, and is demanding the surrender of the Kremlin and the dismantling of the SDI. As Sloan McCormick, your job is to defend America's satellites, thwart attacks by the rogue agency and rescue your lover from a besieged space station. Good luck, General!



MORE CLASSIC S.D.I. MOMENTS

Orbital Operations



When it's time to go out and shoot down some communists, Sloan McCormick does it in style in flight sections featuring smooth 3D movement. As well as defeating the terrorist KGB, you'll have to repair the satellites they damage in order to maintain full SDI coverage of the USA. Luckily, you're fully equipped with some powerful lasers!

The Beginning Of The End



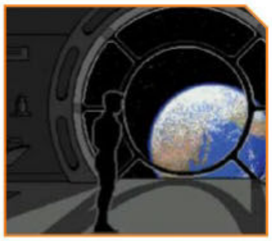
As the first missiles make their way around the planet, the music prepares you for the grim job ahead. You're the sole defender of roughly 300 million human lives, and one error can potentially wipe a sizeable proportion of them out – and with the KGB attacking your satellites, some of them are dependent on secondary coverage…

For You, The War Is Over



There are a variety of ways for you to end the game, and a military debrief accompanies each of them. Being killed in action will grant you full military honours, but that's not nearly the worst fate that awaits Sloan McCormick. Losing too many cities will result in full-scale nuclear retaliation – the worst possible outcome for everyone.

The Price Of Patriotism



You already know that the end game involves taking on the KGB to rescue Natalia – but what if you're not in time? The answer is that Sloan arrives to an empty room. Whether you spent too much time rescuing civilians or shooting down the KGB, you've secured the world's fate but lost the woman who meant the most to you.



© Original art by Bob Wakelin. Restoration work by Mark R. Jones

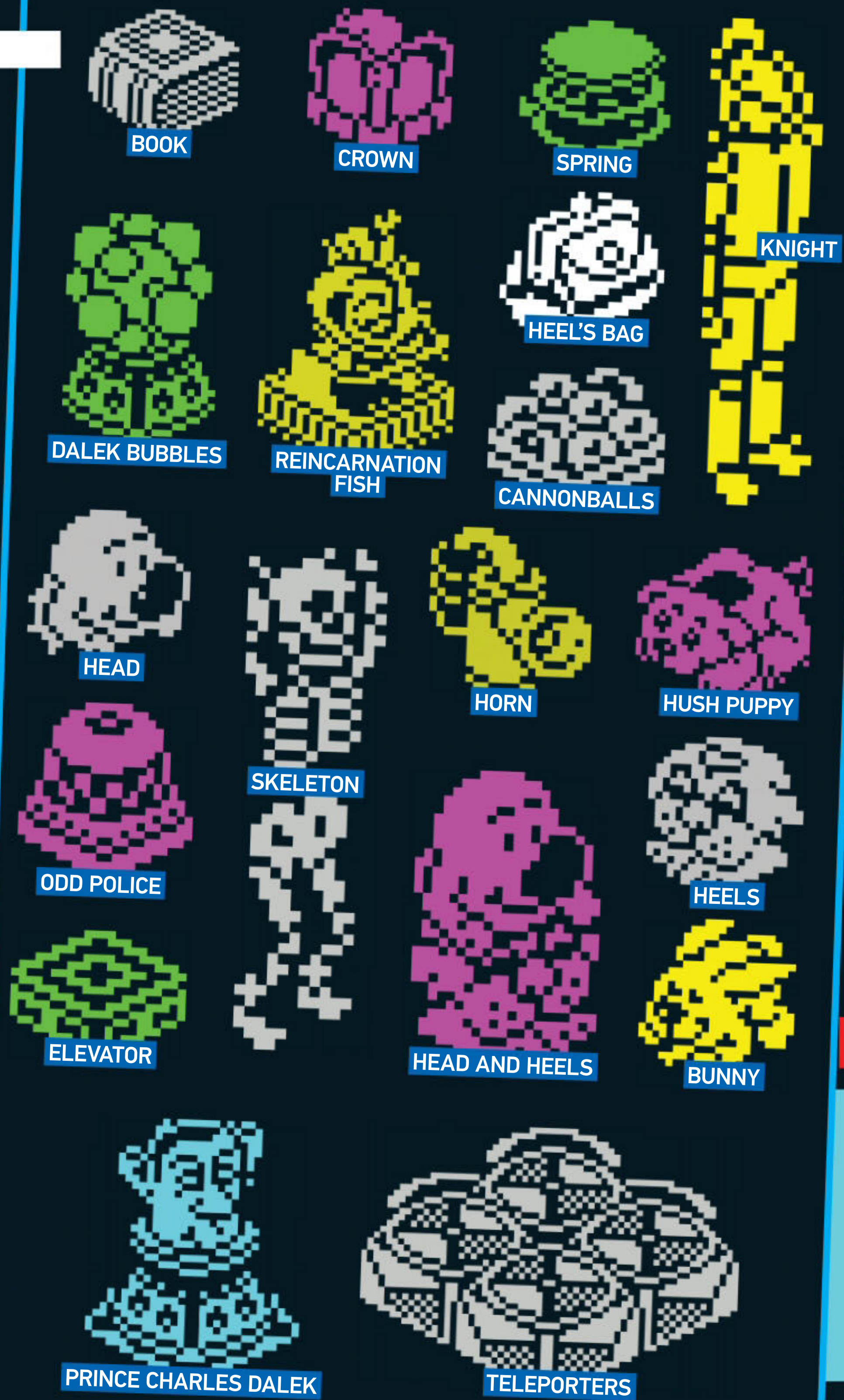
Following the success of Ultimate's groundbreaking Knight Lore in 1984, a predictable cluster of similar games began to appear. Three years later, Jon Ritman and Ocean proved originality was still possible within this crowded genre. Graeme Mason dodges a Prince Charles Dalek and gives you the ultimate guide to this marvellous isometric classic

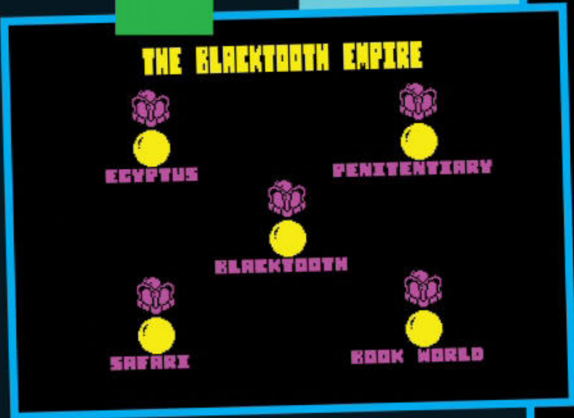
***Knight Lore*: a legend not only in gameplay, but also game design and graphics. Viewed by many as publisher Ultimate's finest hour,** it was the game that launched a whole new genre on the ZX Spectrum in particular. Many developers took note; particularly impressed was programmer Jon Ritman, at the time busy designing his soon-to-be-famous football game, *Match Day*. Working freelance for Ocean Software, Jon's first isometric effort was the comical adaptation of *Batman*. Using an old gaming trick, he considered all the abilities that he would like the dark knight to have, and then took them away, thus making the player earn various gadgets and powers such as the 'Bat Boots' for extra jumping height. *Batman* also used a *Knight Lore*-esque isometric engine. "The germination of the idea for two characters came as an extension of that really," says Jon, "with the added bonus of being able to separate them over and over again." After the double successes of *Match Day* and *Batman*, Ocean was perfectly willing for Jon to create and design his own game as their next project. Freed from the shackles of a licence, the coder set to work building a gargantuan world and a ream of chin-stroking logic puzzles, along with his graphic artist colleague, Bernie Drummond.

Incredibly, Jon reveals that there was no structured design to *Head Over Heels* prior to commencement of coding, and admits that he "made it all up as he went along". Having ▶

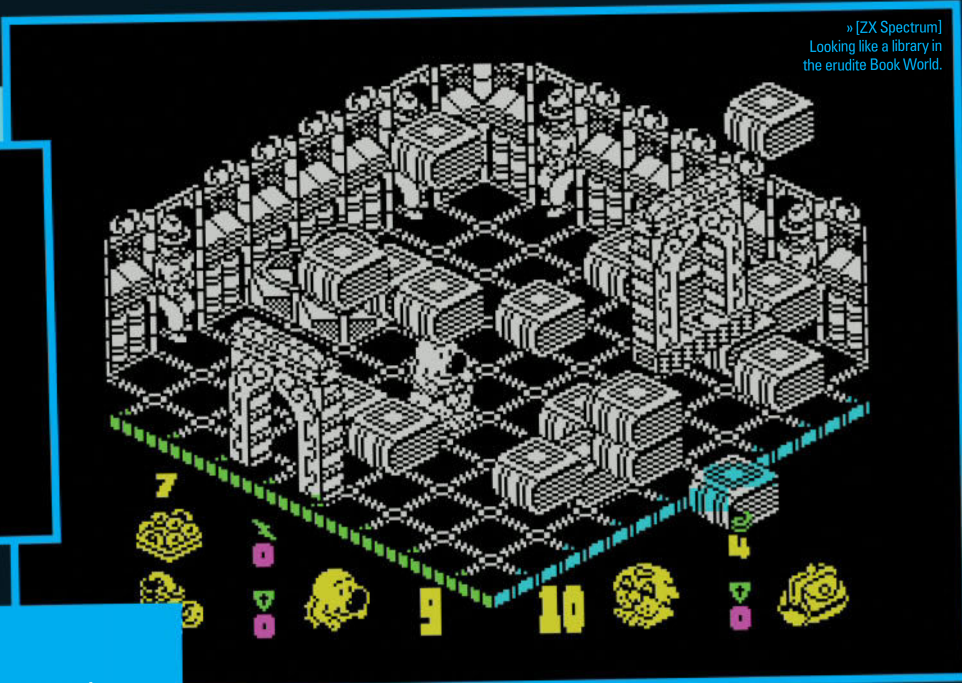
PIXEL PERFECT

Bernie Drummond filled Head Over Heels with all sorts of wacky things





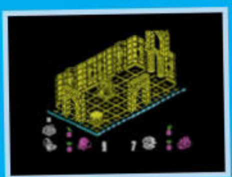
» [ZX Spectrum] Head and Heels' task is summarized in this opening screen.



» [ZX Spectrum] Looking like a library in the erudite Book World.

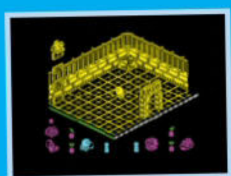
HOW TO PLAY

Struggling to defeat the evil Blacktooth Empire? Help is at hand…



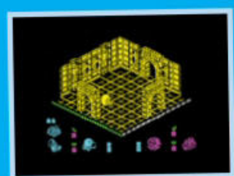
GO FISHING

■ In the middle of this room lies an over-designed fish called the Reincarnation Fish. Gobble him up and it remembers everything about you, effectively acting as a check point should Head or Heels accidentally lose a life.



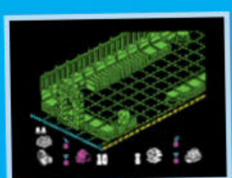
FLUFFY BUNNIES

■ These little white rabbits are definitely worth going out of your way to collect, rewarding the player with special powers such as extra lives, invulnerability and higher jumps. Energizer Bunny, eat your heart out.



USE A MAP OR YOUR MEMORY

■ While a map is very useful, learning the position of the many rooms by heart is an even better way of playing *Head Over Heels*. It may take time, but with multiple exits, such as here, it's worth it.



JUMP AROUND

■ *Head Over Heels* is a platformer at heart, albeit a clever and in-depth one. There's a lot of jumping to be done, so learning how far each character can leap is vital for solving the many puzzles.



TIME ON YOUR SIDE

■ There is no time limit, so the player can take their time, exploring each room. Sometimes a puzzle is not solvable right away, so you can return to have another crack.



TWO HEADS ARE BETTER THAN ONE

■ Some puzzles and rooms can only be solved using Head and Heels' combined powers, so don't panic if a solution seems impossible with just one character.



GRAB THE BAG

■ Only Heels can carry the bag, and it's vital that he picks it up as quickly as possible. Many puzzles rely on Heels' ability to carry and drop objects, so make sure to seek it out immediately.



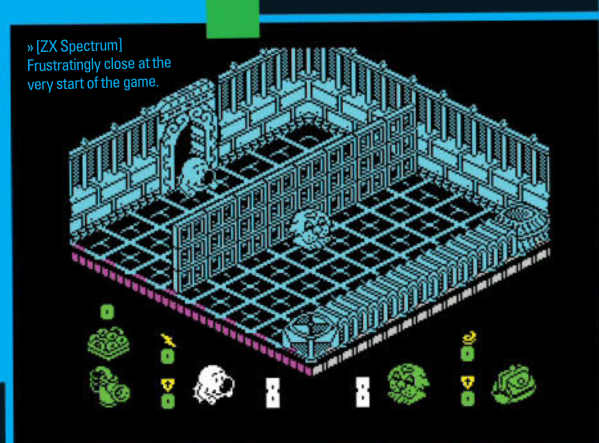
BETTER APART

■ Even when reunited, some rooms will require the two spies to work separately. Constant thought about how the two work is vital if the player is serious about rescuing the enslaved planets.

▶ devised the appropriate title of *Foot And Mouth*, the game's basic premise is of the two characters, tantalisingly separated by a single wall in an early screen, who can be switched between by the player to take advantage of their individual strengths. Head can jump higher, directionally control his jumping and fire doughnuts from a hooter to temporarily stun enemies. Heels can run faster, climb steep staircases and carry objects around in a bag. Combine the two together and each character's abilities also merge, helping the player solve even more puzzles. And as for the seemingly complex storyline which most reviews spent much time analysing, Jon reveals, "The plot was made up after the game was finished. It probably took me about 20 minutes."

Head Over Heels is the story of the two eponymous spies, sent from their home world of Freedom to a planet enslaved by the evil Blacktooth Empire. Their mission: disrupt the local population and instigate a rebellion. A bizarre pair of symbiotic creatures, Head and Heels are quickly captured by the empire and sent to its penitentiary planet. At this point the player takes over and must guide the pair to the moon base, whereupon they can either escape back to freedom or continue their mission and incite rebellions on all four enslaved planets by capturing its respective crown. Completion of this will compel the population of the Blacktooth home planet itself to rise up against its oppressive rulers and enable Head and Heels to destroy the evil emperor. Each planet is presented in an isometric viewpoint and has its own peculiar inhabitants and locations. One, similar to ancient Egypt, contains mummified enemies and countless pyramids. Another is a densely-vegetated jungle planet, infested with primitive, yet effective traps. And, of course, there is Blacktooth, a grim world in which the emperor resides in his castle, surrounded by a range of impassable mountains. The only way in – or out – is via teleporter to the planet's satellite moon base.

The idiosyncratic nature of each planet allowed graphic artist Bernie Drummond to create many excellent and amusing backdrops and sprites. "I encouraged Bernie to do great artwork, stuff that looked good," remembers Jon. "And I more or less didn't care what it



» [ZX Spectrum] Frustratingly close at the very start of the game.







CLASSIC RITMAN Five of the best from the legendary Speccy coder



BEAR BOVVER 1983

■ Jon designed several games for Artic, and this is arguably the best. Featuring large, brightly-coloured sprites, the task was to obtain batteries for Ted's car from a construction site. When we say obtain, we mean steal. Naughty Ted!



MATCH DAY 1984

■ *Match Day* revolutionised Spectrum football, eclipsing efforts such as *Artic's World Cup Football*. For the first time it was possible to actually put together a proper passing move, and the presentation and options were superb.



BATMAN 1986

■ Inspired by Ultimate's *Knight Lore*, Ocean Software handed Jon Ritman the *Batman* licence to work on an isometric game. The result was a comedic, yet absorbing, take on the Dark Knight. You can learn more by picking up RG issue 139.



MATCH DAY II 1987

■ For *Match Day*'s sequel, Jon added new elements such as a variable power kick bar, back heels and an innovative technique called 'Diamond Deflection'. Updated graphics were courtesy of Bernie Drummond, who worked with Jon on *Batman*.



MONSTER MAX 1994

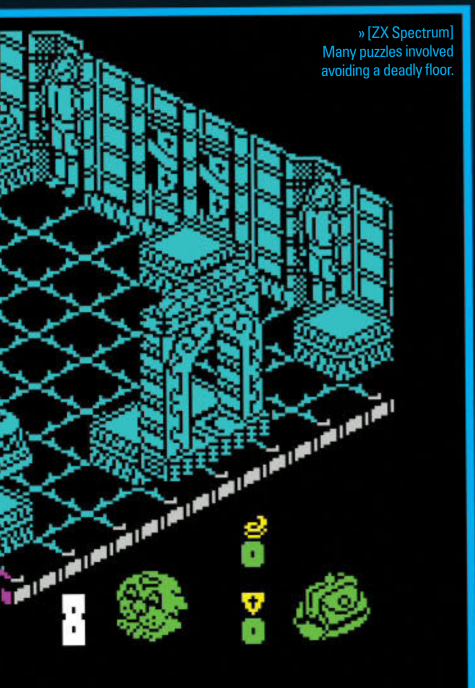
■ Jon's only Game Boy title, this was another excellent isometric adventure and similar in many ways to *Head Over Heels*, so much so it is often regarded as a spiritual successor. Unfortunately, despite good reviews, it sold poorly.

"After the double successes of Match Day and Batman, Ocean was perfectly willing for Jon [Ritman] to create and design his own game as their next project"



» [ZX Spectrum] The Market Place is just as deadly as the other parts of Blacktooth.

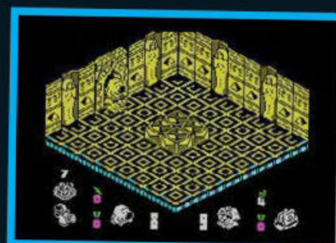
was, or if the scales of each object were entirely different. I had realised early on that if you tried to keep everything on a constant scale, then all the smaller stuff looked crap." Each basic item in the game had a name; for instance, the standard block, that was subtly altered for each planet, was known as a 'brick'. Smaller items were known as 'sweeties'. "So I would just tell Bernie that I needed more sweeties, or whatever," says Jon, "and he would do a pile of them, and I would select the ones that looked the best." Thus *Head Over Heels*' odd style, none more displayed than in the strange enemies such as the mutated Daleks, and helpful items such as cuddly stuffed white rabbits and hush puppies, came about. Within each meticulously-designed world lay many rooms, most with movement, jumping or logic puzzles of some description. To aid Head and Heels are a number of items, similar to the gadgets of Jon's earlier game, *Batman*. Most useful are the white rabbits which can yield extra lives, speed or jumping height. Head can also pick up tempting trays of doughnuts which can be used to stun annoying enemies, while Heels can take advantage of hush puppies, strange creatures that magically teleport away at the sight of Head, unhappy at being mistaken for Heels. All these elements must be used, manipulated and conquered by the player if the planets are to be freed and the empire destroyed.



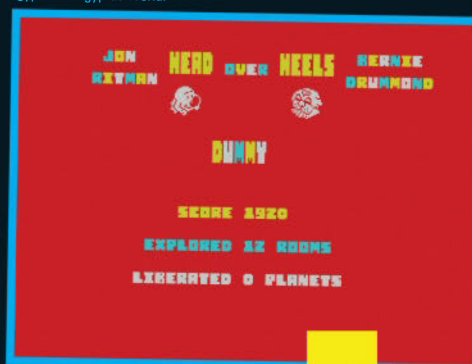
» [ZX Spectrum] Many puzzles involved avoiding a deadly floor.

Head Over Heels was, for the time, one of those rare games that scored impressively across every format it was released on. The ZX Spectrum lead version received a 'Crash Smash' and a score of 97% as its reviewers applauded the meticulously designed and quirky graphics, cunning puzzles and addictive gameplay. Praise from *Crash*'s sister magazine, *Zzap!64*, was even more effusive on Colin Porch's Commodore conversion, surprising considering its monochrome graphics. Yet the reviewers recognised the same playability and fun of the Spectrum original and bestowed an incredible 98% on the game. Despite its critical reception and impressive sales, *Head Over Heels* did not receive a direct sequel. Popular enough to spawn 16-bit versions two years later, it was one of the final original Spectrum games released by Ocean as the famous software house concentrated on licensed properties. Jon Ritman moved to Ultimate – now rebranded as Rare – as a freelance developer, and in 1994 would create a spiritual successor to *Head Over Heels* with the Game Boy title *Monster Max*. Today, *Head Over Heels* remains a fine example of game design and well-balanced puzzle-solving and is not only one of the best isometric games from the era, but one that is fondly remembered to this day. ★

Thanks to Jon Ritman for his time.



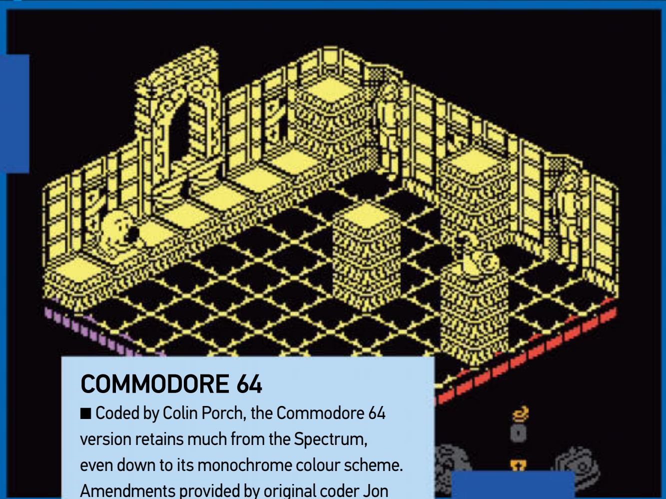
» [ZX Spectrum] Walking like an Egyptian in Egyptus World.



» [ZX Spectrum] A disdainful appraisal of the player's efforts.

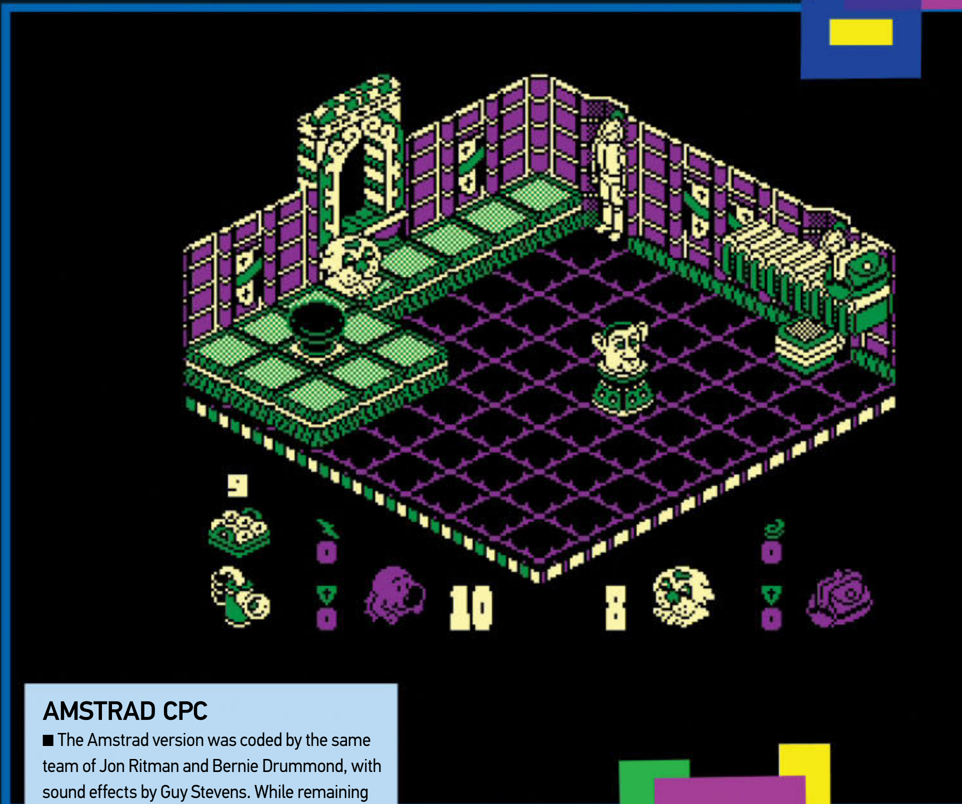
CONVERSION CAPERS

You'll be head over heels with these numerous conversions



COMMODORE 64

■ Coded by Colin Porch, the Commodore 64 version retains much from the Spectrum, even down to its monochrome colour scheme. Amendments provided by original coder Jon Ritman eased the conversion, although other than inevitable aural improvement, the game is comparable and just as sweetly designed.



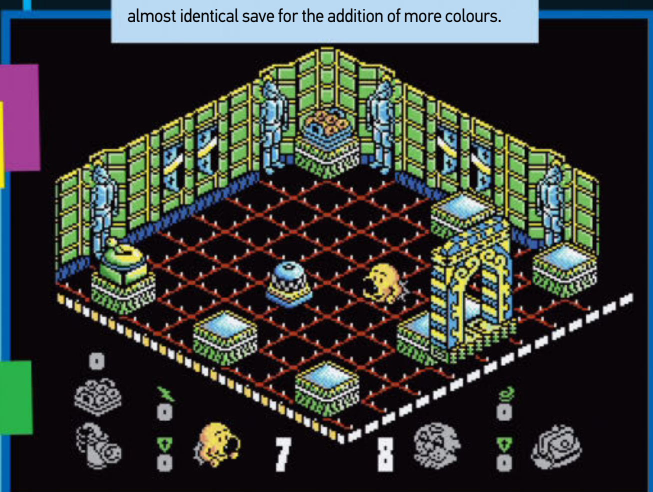
AMSTRAD CPC

■ The Amstrad version was coded by the same team of Jon Ritman and Bernie Drummond, with sound effects by Guy Stevens. While remaining 'merely' a conversion, the upgraded colour palette and superior sound elevate it above the Spectrum version, even though some of the tunes can grate a little after a short time.



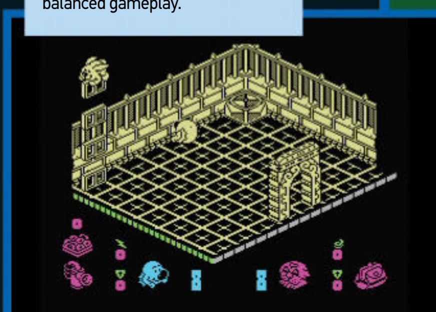
ATARI ST/COMMODORE AMIGA

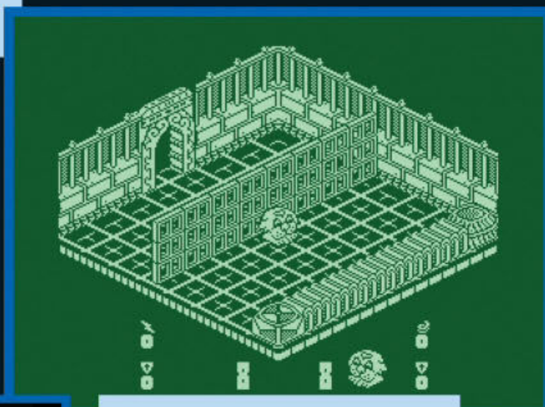
■ Like the Amiga version (below), the Atari ST (above) only got *HOH* two years after its original release. Ported from the C64 version by Colin Porch, they're faithful versions in terms of gameplay, and the graphics are almost identical save for the addition of more colours.



MSX

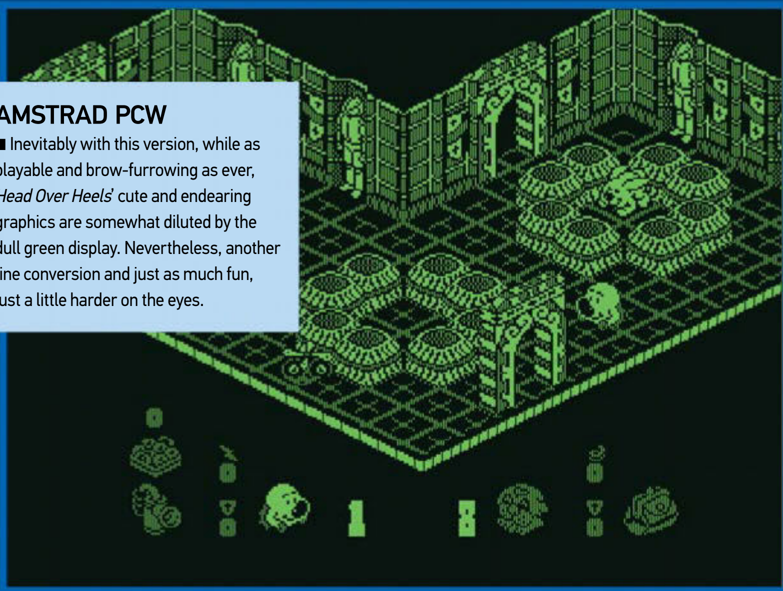
■ Almost identical to the ZX Spectrum version, there are a few cosmetic differences on the MSX with some alternate colours on most levels, and minor graphic alterations. Otherwise, it has the same beautifully balanced gameplay.





ATARI 8-BIT

■ Its graphics are not quite as sharp as the Amstrad version, but the Atari makes a credible effort at recreating the Spectrum original. Sound effects more akin to a shoot-'em-up are a little intrusive and bemusing, but most of the iconic gameplay is there. It's another conversion by Colin Porch.



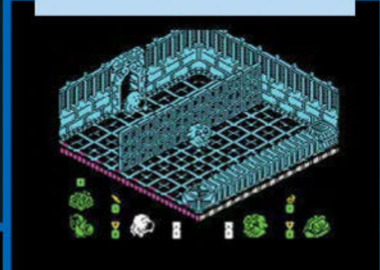
AMSTRAD PCW

■ Inevitably with this version, while as playable and brow-furrowing as ever, *Head Over Heels*' cute and endearing graphics are somewhat diluted by the dull green display. Nevertheless, another fine conversion and just as much fun, just a little harder on the eyes.

"I encouraged Bernie to do great artwork, stuff that looked good"
Jon Ritman

ZX SPECTRUM

■ Jon Ritman's original version was a huge critical hit at a time when interest in isometric games was beginning to wane. Intricately designed graphics from Bernie Drummond and a wonderfully balanced selection of logic puzzles ensured the game was a smash.



PC (RETROSPEC REMAKE)

■ Like many of the well-loved classics of its era, *Head Over Heels* has received several PC remakes. Best of the bunch is this lovely update from Graham Goring (graphics) and coder Tomaz Kac. The exquisite gameplay and level design is retained, now with striking graphics and a useful save system. Head on over to retrospec.sgn.net/games/hoh/index.html for further details and downloads.



DEVELOPER INTERVIEW – COLIN PORCH

We talk to the man behind the Commodore 64, Atari ST and Amiga ports of Head Over Heels



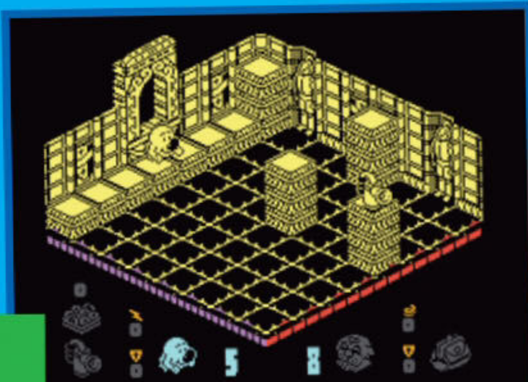
What did you think of the original game and design?
I thought it was superb! The whole concept appealed to me greatly as I love logic and reasoning puzzles.

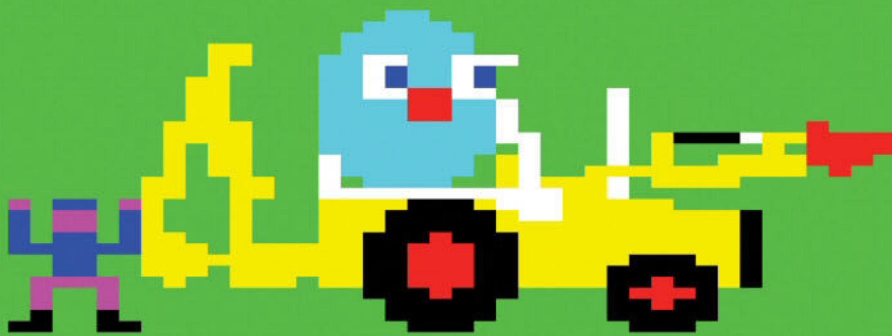
The Commodore 64 wasn't renowned for its isometric games. How did you go about converting *Head Over Heels*?
Essentially I had to reproduce 6502 routines that performed the same tasks as Jon's Z80 ones, which wasn't so easy when it wasn't always obvious what his routines were doing – the maths involved in isometric projection is far from trivial! And although the C64 had wonderful colour possibilities, they could not be used for this. Two colours were all we could use for the rooms, one of which had to be black.

Did you liaise with Jon during development?
Very much so. We had a long meeting at Ocean where Jon outlined the general method of producing the isometric effect for the screen – you only updated the part of the screen that was changing, creating a window around the areas and adding each layer back to front. It sounds simple – but it isn't!

Did you need to change anything so that the game suited the Commodore 64 better?
Personally, no. However, I found out after the game was released that Jon had actually made some changes himself before giving me the data. He was convinced that the C64 was not up to handling some of the more complicated rooms at an acceptable speed, so the C64 room layout was slightly different.

How did the Atari ST and Amiga versions come about?
I was very struck by the Atari ST and I decided to try and get to grips with it and developed my skills in my spare time by converting *Head Over Heels* to it. When I had a working version of the game, I showed it to Ocean and they were very happy to pay me for it. I had no way of changing the bit-streamed data, however, so it was lifted straight from the C64 version, except the graphics were more colourful and quicker.





JCB Digger

RETROREVIVAL

YOU'LL REALLY DIG THIS GAME



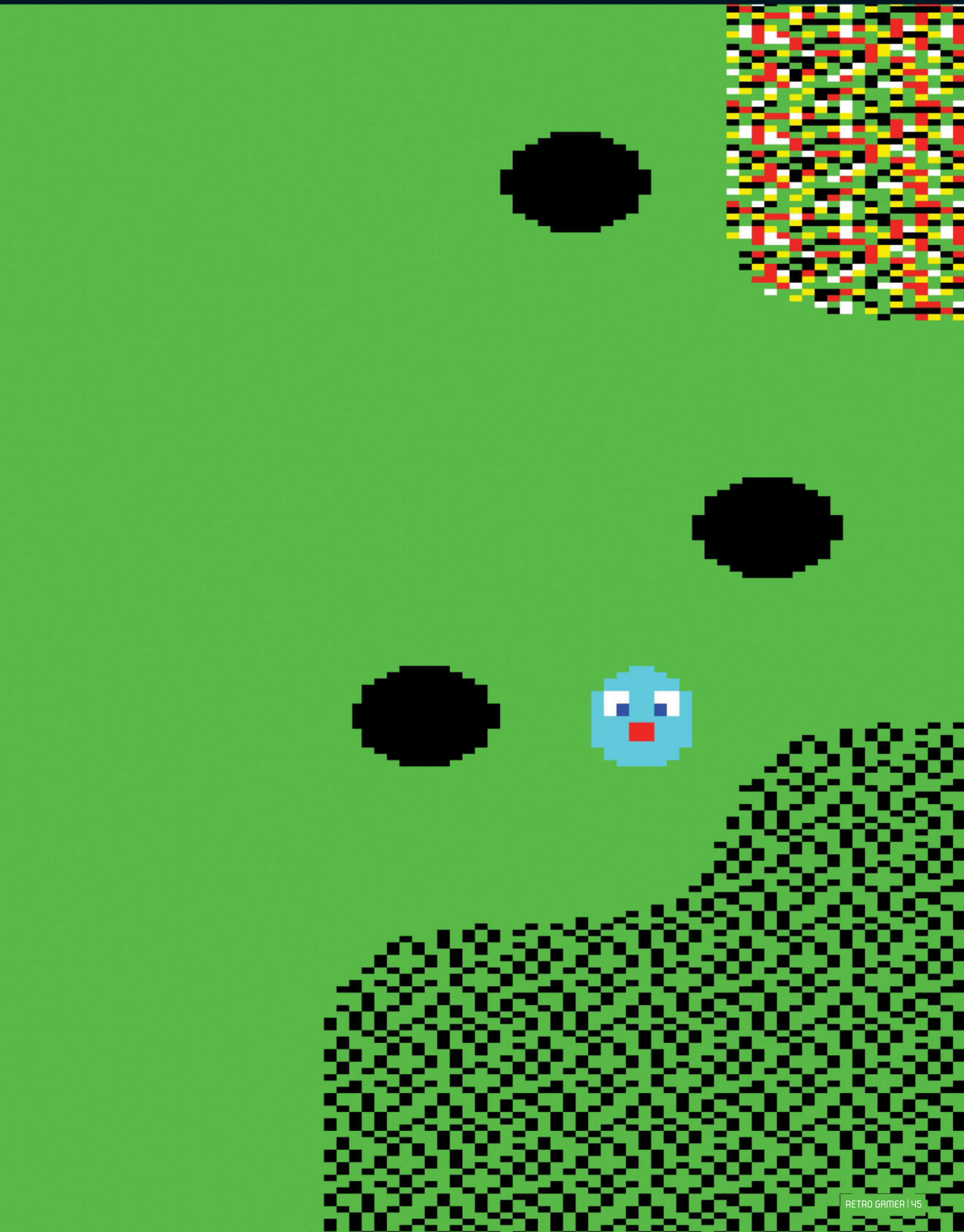
» BBC MICRO » ACORNSOFT » 1983

This title from Acornsoft passed me by completely when it was first released early on in the Eighties. It wasn't until I started going out with my wife that she introduced me to the game, as it was a title she used to enjoy as a girl. She mentioned it to me one day when I had to borrow her dad's BBC Micro for a photoshoot on *gamesTM* (amazingly, he was still using it for his work at the time, which would have been around 2002).

The game itself looks a little juddery today, but it's notable for being one of the first BBC Micro games from Acornsoft to use forced scrolling. It's also a rather charming little take on *Heiankyo Alien*, an old arcade game that would lead to titles like *Space Panic* and *Lode Runner*.

Moving around the large environment you must dig holes in order to catch the roaming meanies. Care must be taken however, as the meanies are rather speedy and you can only dig a set number of holes in which to trap them. Once trapped, you need to fill in the holes, defeating the meanies, just like in *Heiankyo Alien*. Let a meanie get to close to you though, and it will knock your JCB, causing you to fall off and lose a life.

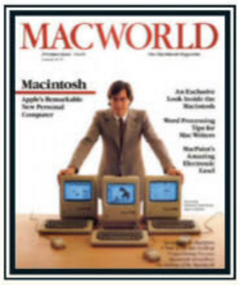
JCB Digger might not be the greatest game in the BBC's library but it's an entertaining one and it serves as a great icebreaker if ever you find yourself in an awkward conversation with your future wife's father. *




Welcome to Macintosh.
Macintosh Plus

Celebrating the Macintosh.

When people think of Apple's mark on gaming, they focus on the ill-fated Pippin. But, as David Crookes explains, the Mac has had its fair share of moments



» The debut issue of *Macworld* in the US featured a youthful-looking Steve Jobs with the Macintosh 128k on the cover.

Steve Jobs was many things: idiosyncratic, charismatic, great at business and exceptional at marketing. But the originator of the Macintosh? Not quite. Steve Jobs' reality distortion field is a component of his genius but, in truth, Apple's most famous run of computers was actually a project started by Jef Raskin, rather than the acclaimed, gifted and turtleneck-clad leader.

The story began when Jef, who joined Apple on January 2 1978 as employee number 31, tried to think of a way to expand home computers from the hobbyist market. He proposed an all-in-one 8-bit machine, called the McIntosh (later changed to 'Macintosh' for legal reasons), intended to retail at $500.

Steve Jobs, was working on a separate machine called Lisa at first, but he eventually climbed aboard the Macintosh project in 1981 when a restructure of Apple forced him off his own troubled Lisa project and caused him to look around for something else that he could sink his teeth into.

In the early days, the Macintosh had 64K of RAM, a Motorola 6809E microprocessor and the capacity to support a 256x256 black and white display. But as the team expanded the its scope, in part to run the Lisa's graphical programs, its specs evolved: the computer was given the same 68000 8Mhz microprocessor as the Lisa, a monochromatic screen at a resolution of 512x342 and a 3.5-inch floppy drive. Memory was also doubled to 128k. Component costs also began to fall rapidly, allowing Steve Jobs and his team to make a more powerful system.

Engineer Burrell Smith fitted the components on to two small circuit boards, and the Mac acquired a detached keyboard and a single-buttoned mouse (later dismissed as a fad by some commentators), designed to work with the keyboard. Three years before the Mac's debut, Raskin quit, leaving Steve Jobs in charge of the project, including its GUI-based OS, System. The end result was wildly different from Raskin's concept, as was its price tag: a huge $2,495. ▶

Mac Timeline.

A brief look at every iteration of the mac since 1984 till modern day

1984

Macintosh 128K
$2,495
■ The original Mac, with its nine-inch CRT monochrome monitor, introduced a graphical user interface and mouse to the masses.

Macintosh 512K
$2,795
■ This machine had the same Motorola 68000 8MHz processor as its predecessor but added four times as much memory.

1985

Macintosh XL
$3,995
■ A version of the flop $9,995 Apple Lisa, the XL modified came with MacWorks XL which allowed Mac ROM emulation.

1986

Macintosh Plus
$2,599
■ With a SCSI port, a 800KB floppy drive and 1MB of expandable RAM, the Plus was sold for almost five years.

1987

Macintosh II $5,500
■ Now boasting a colour display, the Mac had a faster Motorola 68020 16MHz CPU and the capacity for 20MB RAM.

Macintosh SE $2,900
■ A compact Mac with an expansion slot, this computer improved on the Plus and, like the Macintosh II, was sold without a keyboard.



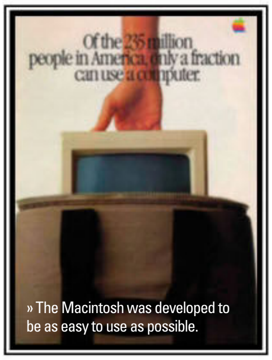
Macintosh 128K © allaboutapple.com







Work progressed well. Andy Hertzfeld had been tasked with creating a great chunk of the OS and he introduced designer Susan Kare, who not only worked on the Mac's infamous icons but the fonts too. They helped to make the operating system easy to use and this would become a fundamental part of the Mac's success, easing the pain of a $2,495 price tag. The computer was about to embark on an epic journey.



» The Macintosh was developed to be as easy to use as possible.

Release

One of the first salvos in the assault on the computer market was an advertisement broadcast to 77.62 million people on the TV station CBS during a break in the third quarter of Super Bowl XVIII. It was 22 January 1984, and director Ridley Scott had sidestepped the usual 'buy-this' approach of adverts in favour of playing on the paranoia of many Americans concerned that the introduction of computers would intrude on privacy.

The Apple board had been unsure about the advert's haunting dystopian vibe and, at one point, Steve Jobs and Steve Wozniak considered going halves on the cost of airing it when the powers-that-be became jittery. Steve Jobs felt the $370,000 advert was in keeping with his belief that the computer would change the world. "On January 24th, Apple Computers will introduce Macintosh," the ad boomed. "And you will see why 1984 won't be like *1984*".

On that day, Steve Jobs took to the stage to officially launch the Mac (making no mention, incidentally, that he had sought to change the code name of the project to 'Bicycle' in February 1981). "Today, one year after Lisa, we are introducing the third industry milestone product: Macintosh," he told the audience, in reference to the Apple II and IBM PC before pulling the computer out of a bag to the strains of Vangelis' musical score from *Chariots Of Fire*. He showed off the computer's voice synthesis and, within a short period of time, $3.5 million worth of Macintoshes were sold. It was a vindication for Steve Jobs as well as, perhaps surprisingly, the Microsoft chairman Bill Gates. Having climbed aboard the project in January 1982, Microsoft had supported the machine with a range of application packages and Bill had praised the Mac's single video mode, crisp pictures and integrated system.

"Steve's vision of where the machine should go – that it should be a simple, inexpensive graphics machine – has been preserved," Bill told *Macworld* magazine in the US. "But the disk, the memory, the code in ROM, the number of bits on the screen – they're all different." Microsoft's apps ensured business people would take the computer seriously and by April the Macintosh had sold 72,000 units. He concluded: "The Mac will be remembered as one of the great classic machines."

Although there were some negative reviews (John Dvorak of the *San Francisco Examiner,* in particular, snarked, "The Macintosh uses an experimental pointing device called a 'mouse'. There is no evidence that people want to use these things") the consensus was that the first Mac enabled people to get people down to business with the minimum of fuss. "The key to the Mac is to spare people from having to know all the complexities of its innards," said engineer Burrell Smith. Whether they were using MacPaint or MacWrite, people were struck by the Macintosh's ease of use.

Yet, for gamers, the Macintosh was far from ideal. It wasn't so much the fact it did not have colour but more a lack of desire to create games. Indeed, Apple wanted to distance the machine from anything frivolous with Andy Hertzfeld recalling a worry within Apple that even the Mac GUI could be viewed as too "game-like".

His built-in game *Puzzle* may have been notable for being the first game to be integrated into a computer's OS, and as the first game to be made specifically for a mouse but he struggled to get it approved. It was only when the game, written as a desktop accessory and so able to share memory with the main application, was re-coded down to a measly 600 bytes that it was allowed. There was no doubt that the Mac was about productivity first and foremost.

1984-1990 The Desktop Publishing Years

By September 1984, Apple had launched a 512K version of the original Macintosh, dubbed the 'Fat Mac', but while that helped in the war against IBM's 256K machines, it was the release of a printer – the Apple LaserWriter – in January 1985 which really spurred sales. Swiftly followed by the launch of Aldus' PageMaker which was aimed specifically at consumers on the insistence of Steve Jobs, the Mac was positioned as a creative machine and a desktop publishing boom followed.

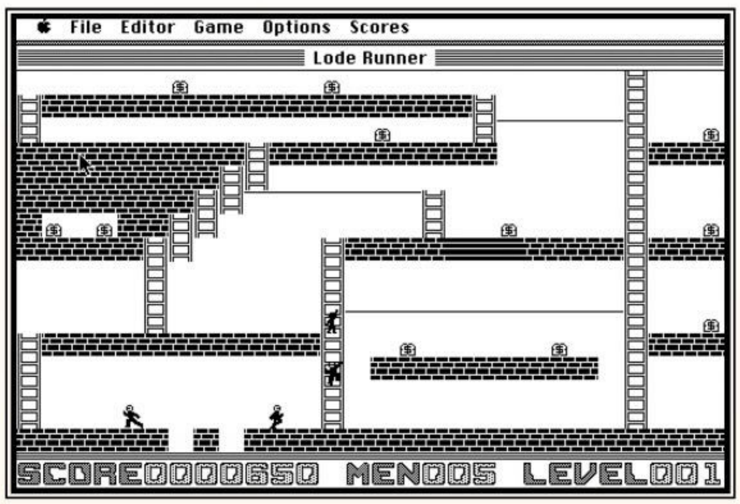
Not that Steve Jobs saw it all first hand: vice president of product development Jean-Louis Gassée got wind that Steve Jobs was seeking to oust the then-

> "We wanted to work on the Mac because it was a cool machine and an interesting technical challenge"
> Robert Woodhead









1989

Macintosh Portable $6,500
■ Apple's battery-powered Portable may have been hot on performance with an active-matrix display but it was heavy and expensive.



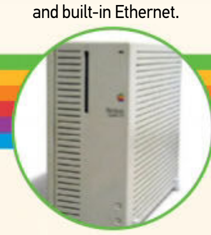
1990

Macintosh Classic $999
■ Sold for three figures and compatible with the original 68000 line, the Classic was faster than the Plus it replaced.

1991

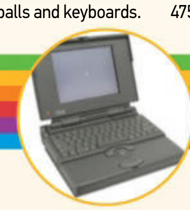
PowerBook 100 series From $2,300
■ These successful laptops with built-in trackballs and pushed-back keyboards came in three flavours – 100, 140 and 170.

Macintosh Quadra 700 $6,000
■ Replacing the Mac II as the high-end machine, this mini tower incorporated a Motorola 68040 processor and built-in Ethernet.

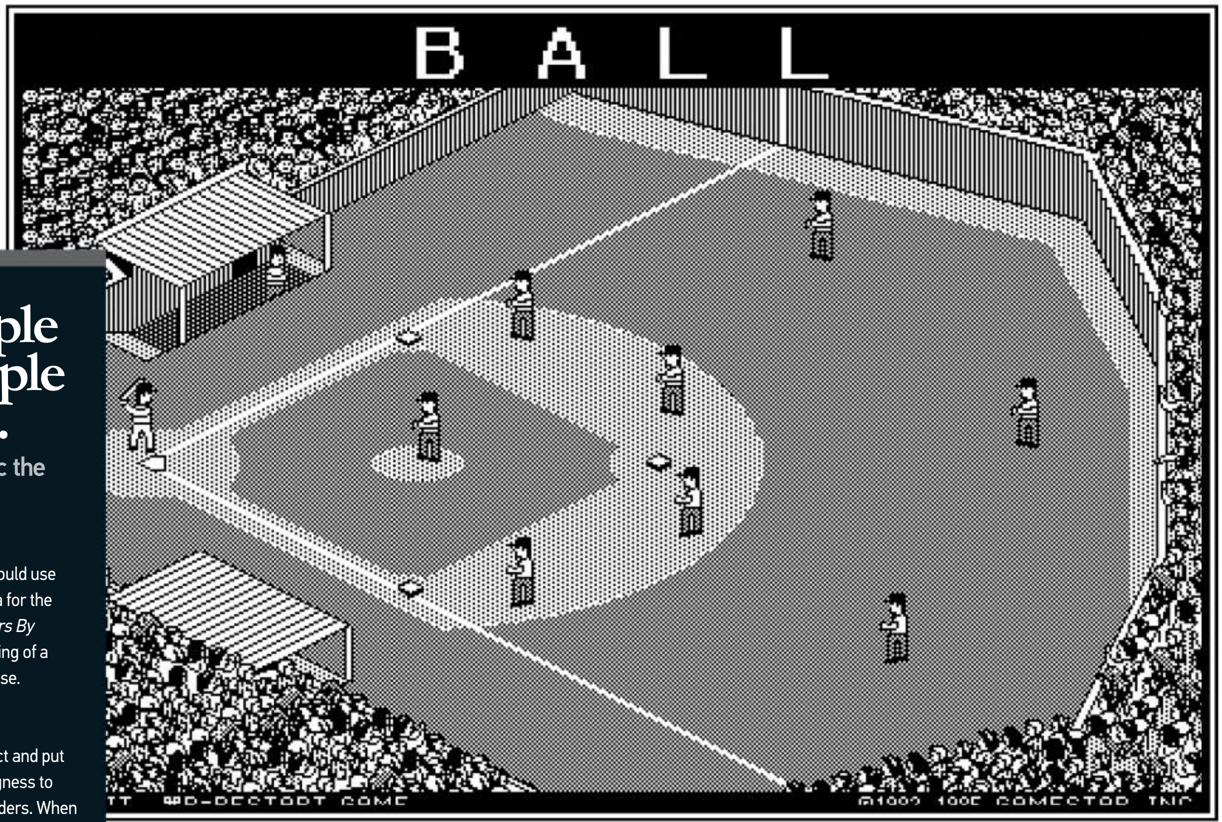


1992

Powerbook Duo series From $2,250
■ There were seven different models in this laptop range spanning four years, each having small trackballs and keyboards.



Macintosh LC From $2,500
■ The 'low cost' Mac had a 16MHz 68020 processor and up to 4MB of RAM. Enhanced LCII, III, III+ and 475s followed.



» [Mac] *Champion Star League Baseball* was a faithful rendition of the popular US sport with sharp visuals.

The Core people behind the Apple Mac Range.

The people who made the Mac the industry giant it is today



JEF RASKIN

Jef emphasised *how* humans would use computers when he had the idea for the Macintosh. His report, *Computers By The Millions*, laid down his thinking of a machine that would be easy to use.



STEVE JOBS

Steve Jobs moved to Jef's project and put his own spin on it. But his willingness to give the Mac his all worked wonders. When he returned to Apple he focussed again on the Mac redefining the range.



BILL ATKINSON

Atkinson had worked on the Lisa project but he moved over to the Mac team, producing much of the initial user interface along with HyperCard which let people to create apps, games and databases.



BURRELL SMITH

In the early days of Mac production, Jef had invited Burrell on board. His prototype of the early Macintosh was impressive and so he was handed the task of designing the gubbins which went inside the machine.



SUSAN KARE

Susan arrived in 1983 and designed the Mac windows, dialog boxes, fonts and icons. Her unique way of making the Mac's software look approachable endeared many to the machine, including newbies.



SIR JONATHAN IVE

British-born Jon Ive was instrumental in making the Macs of Steve Jobs' second era so eyecatching. His flair was unleashed on the 1998 iMac and he has had a hand in all of Apple's Macintoshes since.

Photo of Steve Jobs © Matthew Yohe

CEO John Scully and it prompted Steve to leave in 1985 and form a new company, NeXT. Still, Apple continued to release new Macs, including the expandable 1MB Macintosh Plus, the 16MHz Motorola 68020-powered Macintosh II and the compact Macintosh SE. Guy Kawasaki, who had been Apple's chief evangelist since 1983, was successfully persuading serious developers to create apps for the Mac. But gaming was not on his agenda even though Apple Computers officially sold Steve Capps' *Through The Looking Glass* (the only game it took on board).

It didn't stop a flurry of releases, though. Francis Pandolfi, who headed Scarborough Systems and released *Run For The Money*, told *InfoWorld magazine* he had confidence in the market. And while the Mac lacked high-end arcade conversions (and had a few staid offerings such as *Mac-Slots*, *Mac-Jack* and chess game *Sargon III*), some coders were enthused. *The Ancient Art of War*, Infocom's *Zork*, *Lode Runner*, the RPG *Ultima II* and Bill Budge's *Pinball Construction Set* (which Steve Wozniak called, "The greatest program ever written for an 8-bit machine") made their way from Apple II, while adventure game *Transylvania* took advantage of the Mac's sharp, high-res visuals by splitting the screen into four boxes and making use of an on-screen, mouse-controllable compass for navigation.

Andrew Greenberg and Robert Woodhead rewrote Sci-Tech's *Wizardry* from the ground up. "We wanted to work on the Mac because it was a cool machine and an interesting technical challenge," Robert tells us. "Back then, Mac programming had to be done on a Lisa and getting things to fit on a 128K Mac was as hard as getting the original game to fit on a 48K Apple II."

There were also many Mac-originated games from mindSports' *Ground Zero* and the platformer *Dark Castle To Scarab Of Ra* and *The Fool's Errand*. "We weren't sure how big the market was going to be, but the Mac interface was going to be influential and we wanted to play with it," Robert adds. "You may recall that we implemented the multiple overlapping Window-style in the Apple *Wizardry* about that time as well."

Infocom supported the Mac too, creating interactive fiction title *The Hitchhiker's Guide To The Galaxy* to the joy of early Mac adopter Douglas Adams. *Airbourne!* was the first to use digitised sound and *Megaroids* was a fine *Asteroids* clone by Mike and Mitch Bunnell. In fact, by the end of the decade things were becoming very interesting. It had become apparent where the stronger Mac markets were (the US, Canada and France) and the AppleTalk network and the use of modems opened up multi-user games including the five-player *Maze Wars+* (which came with the Mac for a spell), war simulation *Strategic Conquest* and Spectrum Holobyte's flight simulator, *Falcon*.

Developers such as Will Wright, who produced *SimCity* on the Mac, enjoyed the less-crowded market and niche audience the computer provided. Yet one invention during the Eighties – the HyperCard – would pave the way for further greatness in the next decade – just as Apple's popularity began to severely wane. ▶

1993

Macintosh LC 500 series From $2,000

■ Incorporating the 520, 550, 575 and 580, these computers had 14-inch displays, CD-ROM drives and stereo speakers.

Macintosh TV From $2,097

■ An attempt to essentially combine a LC520 computer with a television barely lasted four months and sold just 10,000 units.

Macintosh Centris From $2,520

■ These were lower in performance than the Quadras. They were deemed market confusing and soon abandoned.

Macintosh Quadra 800 $4,700

■ It had the same 68040 33Mhz processor as the Quadra 950 but it barely lasted a year. The faster 840AV was also released.

1994

PowerBook 500 series From $4,800

■ Starting with the 540c, this new PowerBook used a Motorola 68LC040 CPU and it replaced the trackball with a trackpad.

1996

Power Macintosh 4400 $1,700

■ This Power Mac was originally only sold in Europe but was released in the US and was known as the 7220 in Australia and Asia.



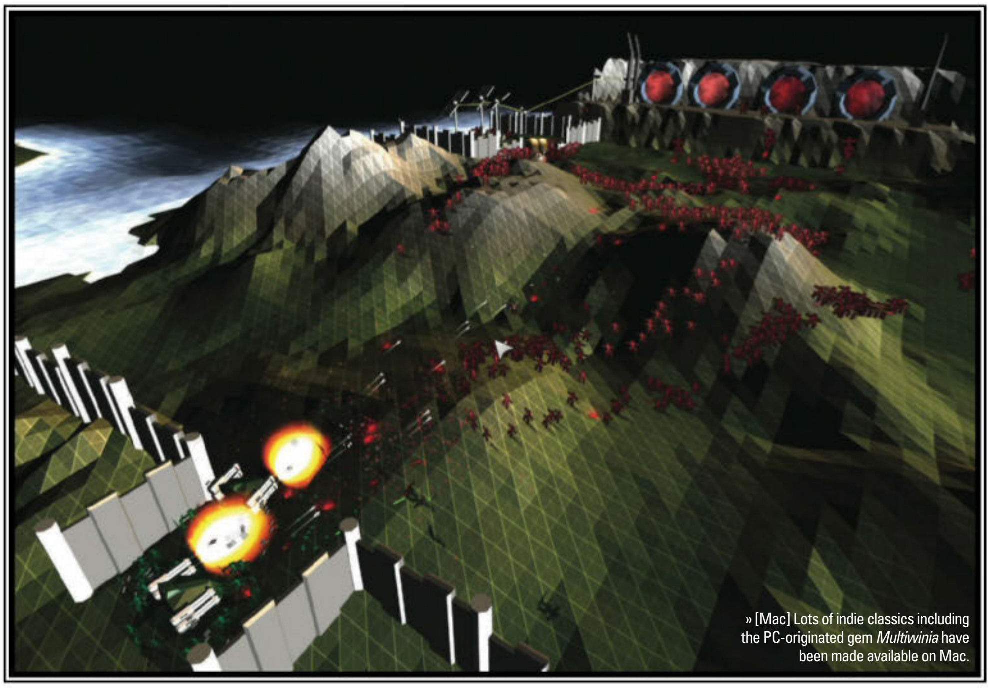




» [Mac] Presto Studios produced a third *Myst* – *Myst III: Exile* - for the Mac OS in 2001 with the game spanning four CDs.



» [Mac] *Warcraft: Orcs & Humans* was converted by Blizzard Entertainment from Windows to the Mac systems in 1996.



» [Mac] Lots of indie classics including the PC-originated gem *Multiwinia* have been made available on Mac.

1990-1998
The Decline Of Apple

Bill Atkinson had designed HyperCard, an early app maker, in 1987. It allowed non-programmers to efectively put together interactive information on cards which were grouped into shareable 'stacks'. Each card would contain images, information and buttons linking to details on the same or other card.

The children's adventure game, *The Manhole*, was created using Hypercard in 1988 by brothers Rand and Robyn Miller but it was their subsequent Mac game, *Myst*, in 1993 which blew gamers away. "*Myst* revealed a hidden value of the Mac market – getting the Mac community excited about a game could drive success across all platforms," says Peter Tamte, who founded the world's largest developer and publisher of Mac software – MacSoft – in 1993.

He says the game woke people to the Mac's potential. "*Myst* took off when the editor of *Macworld* got excited about it and then spread the word to the Mac community," Peter adds. "The lesson? Target the niche first. Let the niche help you cross the chasm to the mainstream market."

At the time, other fledgling Mac-only developers had been making their mark too. MacPlay was founded as a division of Interplay Entertainment and it brought *Wolfenstein 3D, Alone In The Dark* and *Descent* to the Mac. Bungie, formed in 1991 by Alex Seropian, published the tank shooter *Operation: Desert Storm* followed by *Minotaur: The Labyrinths Of Crete* with a multi-user mode that worked via AppleTalk. The FPS *Pathways Into Darkness* in 1993 was followed by the breakthrough *Marathon* series. In 1997, *Myth: The Fallen Lords* was the icing on the cake.

> "I reported directly to Steve Jobs, so I had the opportunity to speak with him at length about videogames on the Mac"
> Peter Tamte

LucasArts brought over its point-and-click adventures including the *Monkey Island* series. Meanwhile, Windows games were also finding their way to the Mac thanks to companies such as MacSoft and Interplay. Ambrosia Software was founded in 1993, debuting the Mac-only shooter *Maelstrom*. Indie game developer Spiderweb Software produced *Exile*; while Freeverse Inc started as a shareware company and won numerous *Macworld* awards. *Hearts Deluxe* was notable for its AI.

Yet Windows 3.0 was making inroads (Sculley had allowed Microsoft to mimic System's look) and the Apple product line was becoming confusing. Mac clones were allowed, Windows 95 proved popular and Apple's position as a computer manufacturer was falling. The company released the Macintosh Classic at a wallet-friendly $999, unveiled "low-cost colour" Macintosh LC machines and replaced Motorola CPUs with RISC PowerPC architecture but Apple was lurching from bad to worse.

In 1996, Apple was on the verge of bankruptcy and Dr Gilbert Amelio had taken control as CEO, replacing Michael Spindler. Steve Jobs, when asked what was going wrong at his former company, said: "Apple stood still." The following year, Gilbert decided Apple should buy NeXT and Steve Jobs returned to the first company he founded. He vowed Apple would never repeat mistakes such as 1993's Macintosh TV which sought to integrate a television with a computer and 1995's ill-fated Mac-derivative Apple Pippin multimedia console. For some it was too late – MacPlay was abandoned in 1997 – but "Think Different" was Jobs' mantle and a new future awaited.

1998-2005
The revival

With Gilbert having left, Apple was being steered by Steve Jobs and Apple began to feel a fresh breeze blowing through the corridors of its Cupertino HQ. The new boss put a stop to the cloned Macs and switched

1997

PowerBook 2400c $3,500
■ Replacing the PowerBook Duo 2300c, this had a fast PowerPC 603e 180MHz processor and it forewent a CD-ROM drive.

Power Macintosh 9600 $3,700
■ Replacing the 9500 as the flagship desktop, this machine was released with the 7300 and 8600 and the last to support System 7.

Power Macintosh G3 $1,599
■ The original beige tower G3 was the first to use the PowerPC G3 processor and it was also sold direct via Apple's online store.



PowerBook G3 $5,700
■ Apple also released laptops with G3 chips and it was said to be the fastest notebook around. It was discontinued in 2001.

1998

iMac G3 $1,299
■ The 'Steve Jobs' effect on Apple was noticeable with the release of the colourful G3, designed by Sir Jonathan Ive.



from System 7 to Mac OS 8. He also worked to introduce the new all-in-one iMac in 1998.

The iMac G3 was a bold statement with its gorgeous curved, egg styling and translucent casing in 13 different colours. Apple – seen as an outsider in a PC-dominated world – strived to set itself apart further but more positively with this machine, introducing two USB ports and deciding to ditch the floppy disc. It sold 800,000 units in five months. It was the start of a Mac revival.

For some companies, it was impeccable timing. Feral Interactive was founded in 1996 solely to port and publish Mac games, going on to work on some of the biggest videogames around from *Max Payne* to *Worms 3D*. It also injected new life into MacSoft which ensured the first commercial port of *Quake* was on the Mac. *Sid Meier's Civilization II* was brought across too, and *Tomb Raider II* was converted following success on Windows and the PlayStation. It looked a treat with a 3D accelerator card installed.

Blizzard ensured its releases were made available for the Mac as well as Windows, bringing the likes of *StarCraft*, *Warcraft II: Battle.net Edition*, *Diablo II* and *World Of Warcraft* to Mac. It helped enormously that the new Macs were aimed at consumers as well as businesses. Their affordability and growing user base opened up the gaming market further.

But what was Apple's stance towards videogaming this time around in this new era? Favourable as it happens. "I reported directly to Steve Jobs, so I had the opportunity to speak with him at length about videogames on the Mac," says Peter Tamte, who left MacSoft in 1998 and worked as the senior director in consumer marketing for Apple up until 1999. "Steve was a huge supporter of Mac gaming – as were many other senior Apple executives in the company. In fact, there were a number of other senior executives at Apple who I would describe as core gamers."



» The iMac G3's revolutionary design partly saved the Macintosh and unleashed a flurry of new games.

Killer Apps.

Nine games that defined the Mac



BALANCE OF POWER

■ This innovative Mac-first strategy game by the acclaimed designer Chris Crawford centred on the politics of the Cold War and allowed gamers to choose sides. It had AI so complex a book of the same name emerged a year later detailing the formulas Chris used.



THE COLONY

■ This was initially developed on the 128k Mac until the 512k version was released. The game, which involved repairing a ship and preventing an alien takeover, rendered its 3D graphics in real time and it was named as one of the best games of 1988.



DARK CASTLE

■ Side-scrolling puzzler *Dark Castle* with its rock-throwing hero may have had monochome graphics but the level of detail across the game's 14 levels more than made up for it. Controlled via keyboard and mouse, it spawned sequels and a colour version.



CRYSTAL QUEST

■ Patrick Buckland's *Crystal Quest* has been dusted off and revived many times since 1987. As well as frenetically moving around space, avoiding aliens and collecting crystals to open a portal to the next level, gamers could edit the graphics and audio.



SIMCITY

■ Having enjoyed creating maps within the game *Raid On Bungeling Bay*, Will Wright began work on his city-building sim, *SimCity*. It introduced the premise that has held firm through subsequent sequels and it suited the typical, thoughtful, Mac gamer.



MAELSTROM

■ Ambrosia was an important name for Nineties Mac gamers, producing copious numbers of shareware games including the *Asteroids* clone, *Maelstrom*. With 256-colour animation and addictive action, it brought an arcade experience to the Mac II.



MARATHON

■ Back when Bungie was a Mac-only developer, it stunned gamers with this epic sci-fi FPS. Allowing for eight-player action, it was immediately seized upon by game-starved Mac users of the Nineties and it eventually spawned a trilogy.



MYST

■ This was constructed in HyperCard over two years by a team at Cyan headed by brothers Rand and Robyn Miller. It was packed with atmosphere as well as puzzles to solve. The PC version sold far more copies but the Mac is where is started.



MYTH: THE FALLEN LORDS

■ Bungie's next game was another superb Mac-originated title: a RTS focused on individual soldiers fighting their own battles. It was also a technological feat of genius, thanks to its advanced physics engine.

1999

Power Macintosh G3 $1,299
■ A new G3 was released as a stylish blue and white model but it only lasted for eight months.



Power Mac G4 $1,599
■ The G4 line of fast Macs were called supercomputers by Apple and they replaced the Power Macintosh G3.

iBook G3 $1,599
■ Dubbed the 'Clamshell' for its unique transparent coloured plastic design, the successful iBook G3 computer included a PowerPC G3 CPU.



2000

Power Mac G4 Cube $1,799
■ The Cube was perhaps the most beautiful of all. It included a PowerPC G4 processor and it could include a DVD-ROM drive.



2001

iBook G3 Snow $1,299
■ The clamshell design was ditched in favour of a traditional looking, yet smaller laptop, that had a higher-res screen.

PowerBook G4 $2,599
■ The first line of these laptops had titanium or aluminium bodies housing 400 or 500MHZ PowerPC G4 processors.



Interview: Peter Tamte.

He set up MacSoft and worked for Apple, Bungie and Destineer. Few people know Mac gaming so well



Why did you decide to set up MacSoft and the subsidiary MacSoft Games?
As an avid Mac user, I noticed three kinds of software missing on the Mac: big PC games, key consumer productivity tools and inexpensive consumer software. I believed the Mac market was large enough to support all three. Almost immediately, games became the largest segment for us. Throughout MacSoft's first decade, games were typically around 65 per cent of our sales.

Why didn't games figure highly on Macs during the Eighties?
Apple management didn't want the Mac to be perceived as a toy, so Apple did very little to encourage games on the Mac. The big publishers were also generating more revenue on other platforms, so they didn't perceive to make their games available for the Mac to be worth the distraction it would cause to their more lucrative development and marketing efforts.

Why were the Nineties a better time for Mac gaming and how did MacSoft contribute to that success?
Apple leadership began seeing how Apple's earlier failures in videogames had hurt the Mac and MacSoft became the largest advertiser in all the major Mac publications. It raised the visibility of Mac gaming which helped demonstrate the economic viability of Mac gaming both to Apple and to other game creators. This helped us reverse a cycle of decline, and we began seeing the creation of new Mac games companies, as well as major publishers growing their interest in the Mac range.

Was there a 'typical' Mac gamer?
The typical Mac gamer tended to be more interested in strategy, and real-time strategy, games than the typical PC gamer. The Mac market skewed a little more towards Strategy and RTS versus FPS on PC. Also, since the number of core gamers on the Mac wasn't much, much lower than on PC, only core games that also had very broad appeal could be successful on the Mac.

Why did you join Bungie after working at Apple?
I got totally hooked on *Myth*. I loved the emphasis on tactics, the rich stories, and immersive world that Bungie created.

You stuck with the Mac when creating Destineer in the Noughties. Why?
I think there was a golden age of Mac gaming in the early-Noughties. Because of the Apple Stores, we had an awesome way of reaching millions of Mac users. Plus, we could sell through Best Buy and many other superstores worldwide. This made it possible for MacSoft (which Destineer bought from Atari in 2003), as well as a few other Mac games companies, to deliver most of the big PC games to the Mac market very quickly after they came out on PC.



» *Myst*, which originated on Mac, was a much-ported game, even finding its way to the Nintendo DS.

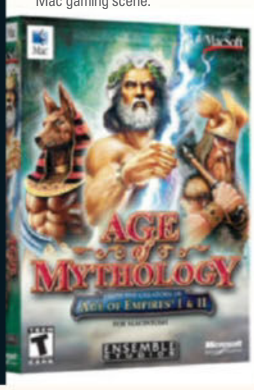


» [Mac] *Halo* was originally earmarked for the Mac and it was unveiled in 1999 by Steve Jobs. Bungie was sold to Microsoft but *Halo: Combat Evolved* was released on the Mac in 2003.



» Today, there are thousands of games available for the Apple Mac thanks to the Mac App Store.

» MacSoft published many games which had originated on other formats, helping prop up the Nineties Mac gaming scene.



It was for this reason Apple replaced the iMac's graphics chip right after the original iMac launched and why Apple even released updates to the entire Mac OS to support the needs of specific games. Having built-in Ethernet, a sharp display and a big hard drive also worked. The resurgence even persuaded MacPlay to come back in 2000, licensed from Interplay by United Developers. *Baldur's Gate II* and the first two *Fallout* games were brought across.

What's more, Ron Johnson was appointed the senior vice president of retail operations and Apple opened its first store in May 2001. "Apple also allocated large amounts of shelf space for games in its stores, and its staff worked with retailers around the world to be sure they had good selections of Mac games in their stores throughout the early-Noughties," Peter added. "Apple also regularly featured games in its marketing efforts. They were good times for Mac gaming."

Even so, Peter did end up leaving the scene. After departing Apple, he had become executive vice president of Bungie and its game, *Halo*, had been showcased by Steve Jobs at the MacWorld conference in 1999. Although it was pencilled in for a Mac release in 2000, Microsoft's purchase of Bungie made the game an Xbox-exclusive. It would be three years before *Halo* would see the light of day on the Mac.

"I was involved in the sale, and very much in favour of it," Peter tells us. "The main reason we wanted to sell to Microsoft was because the world's most powerful company at the time was giving us the opportunity to redefine console gaming. This sounds dramatic but, it was exactly how we saw it and it is what happened. This kind of impact is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity that we would have been foolish not to pursue."

2002

iMac G4 $1,799
■ Introducing a LCD flatscreen perched on an adjustable arm to the Mac range, the all-in-one came bundled with an Apple Pro keyboard and mouse.



eMac $999
■ The 'e' in eMac stood for education because the system was originally intended for use in schools and colleges. It contained a PowerPC G4 processor.

2003

iBook G4 $1,099
■ The G4 processor was introduced to the iBook line and a slot-loading optical drive replaced the tray. The range lasted until 2005.



Power Mac G5 $1,999
■ This powerhouse came in a lavish aluminium case with a mesh front and it was said to be the speediest computer.

2004

iMac G5 $1,899
■ The G5 was the last iMac to use a PowerPC processor but it brought a fresh design – one that endures today – to the desktop line-up.



2005

Mac Mini $699
■ A keyboard-less, mouse-less, display-less Mac Mini measuring just 51x165x165mm opened Mac computing to a much wider userbase.





» [Mac] Many older games including *Grim Fandango* originated on the PC but have now found a home, in a remastered form, on OS X.

> "We wanted to sell to Microsoft because the world's most powerful company was giving us the opportunity to redefine console gaming"
>
> Peter Tamte

2006
Death of the PowerPC

Apple had followed up the PowerPC G3 processor with the G4 and G5 and they had come with some weird and wonderful designs. The kookiest was the iMac G4 which had a screen atop an egg-shaped base while the iMac G5 was a precursor to the look of the current iMacs. It was also the last to use a PowerPC processor. In 2006 – five years after Apple had ditched Mac OS in favour of OS X – the Intel iMac was unveiled. It coincided with the introduction of the MacBook, finally laying to rest the iBook, which had been popular since 1999 and the PowerBook which had been a staple in the market for a further eight years.

By this point, Apple had become a rather different kind of company, a company which had revolutionised music, thanks to the iPod – which was launched in 2001 – and iTunes. The iPhone would be unveiled in 2007 but the Mac was still a flagship Apple product and Intel had finally got its way, much to the annoyance of a strong contingent of Apple stalwarts annoyed that their machines were becoming too PC for their liking.

The many changes up to 2006 had some negative effects on gaming (the switch to OS X had eventually killed off the classic environment with the release of Leopard, effectively cutting off a huge back catalogue of games) but the move to Intel had the bonus of allowing Windows to dual-boot on Macs which widened the number of playable games. TransGaming also released Cider which allowed Windows games to run as if they were made for Mac OS X and needed no rebooting. It wasn't all good – the switch to Intel wreaked havoc with many emulators upsetting the Mac's retro community - but the growing number of games meant the Mac was finally coming out of the cold and more games than ever began to be released.

At Apple's annual conference in June 2007, EA co-founder Bing Gordon said the publisher would release Mac games simultaneously alongside Windows equivalents, so long as an Intel processor was present. It heralded the release of *Need For Speed Carbon*, *Command & Conquer 3: Tiberium Wars* and *Battlefield 2142*, among others. The switch away from PowerPC worked for many developers. EA did not have to use Aspyr Media to rewrite code, for instance. It also ensured enough content for Steam to fill a new OS X launch in June 2010. *Portal*, *Team Fortress 2* and *Half-Life 2* could be played on the Mac.

One more thing...

A few months after Steam's move, the Mac App Store was announced at Apple's Back To The Mac event. It was released in January 2011 as a free update for Snow Leopard users and it chalked up more than a million downloads in 24 hours.

But it had a knock-on effect. Apple began eliminating the software sections in Apple Stores, forcing Mac game sales online and retailers felt they could not justify the shelf space for Mac Games. "Worse, for MacSoft, Microsoft refused to let us sell Mac versions of *Age Of Empires*, *Halo*, and other games online," says Peter.

Yet the Mac App Store has worked well for indie games – the likes of *Machinarium* and *Braid* are popular titles and there are lots of retro games including *Grim Fandango Remastered*. At the same time, the emergence of the third-party multisystem emulator OpenEmu has proved to be revolutionary for opening up retro gaming and making older systems accessible.

Apple now takes gaming much more seriously than it did before. It knows games are an important to its mobile devices, computers and for Apple TV's success and it appreciates they have a strong place on Macs too, whether its a MacBook, MacBook Air, MacBook Pro, iMac, Mac Pro or Mac Mini. That may not have been the intention for the original Macs but Steve Jobs, who died on 5 October 2011, would no doubt be pleased. "I want to put a ding in the universe," he once said. With the Macs, he did just that.

Mac By Numbers.

1979 The year Macintosh development began

$500 Cost of producing the first Mac

$1,000,000,000 The value of desktop publishing to Apple by 1988

27 Steve Jobs' age when he unveiled the Mac

1991 The year a Mac Portable sent first ever email from space

48 Dev team signatures in the Mac 128k

800,000 Debut iMacs sold in 1998

72,000 Macintosh 128ks sold in 100 days

2006

iMac $1,299
■ Steve Jobs announced the new Intel-based iMacs to world. The case design would remain the same but the computers would be faster.

MacBook $1,099
■ The MacBook was also given new Intel chips – the Core Duo – but the early models were recalled due to some sporadic overheating.



MacBook Pro $1,999
■ The same treatment extended to the MacBook Pro – a machine that had Intel chips, built-in iSight and Apple Remote.

Mac Pro $2,499
■ With two 2.66GHz Dual-Core Intel Xeon processors and twice the performance of a Power Mac G5 Quad, this was a mighty fine, but costly, machine.



2008

MacBook Air $1,799
■ Originally available only as a 13.3-inch model and said to be the thinnest of all notebooks, this range continues to this day.



Present

Six ranges From $499
■ Today, Apple continues to sell the MacBook, MacBook Air, MacBook Pro, iMac, Mac Pro and Mac Mini, with OS X El Capitan as the current operating system.



A DECK OF LEGENDS

Walter Day's Videogame Trading Cards

From keeper of the scores to dealer of the cards, Twin Galaxies founder Walter Day tells Paul Drury all about his 'gift to gaming culture'





Dressed in his distinctive black-and-white striped shirt and brandishing a freshly-printed Billy Mitchell card in his hand, Walter Day is in ebullient mood.

"All the lives captured on these cards, all these individual coloured threads woven together which form the big picture," he says. "It's like a tapestry. Someone in the future is going to see them and say, 'This was the culture of the time,' like they're looking at an insect trapped in amber. We are the first generation, we founded and launched the age of gaming and we are still alive!"

Walter has a long history of celebrating the culture of videogaming. Back at the start of the Eighties, he opened an arcade in the small town of Ottumwa, Iowa. Naming it Twin Galaxies, it soon became not only a mecca for the best gamers in the USA and beyond, it grew into an organisation that would track and validate high scores across the globe. It organised tournaments, staged big gaming events, established the US National Video Game Team and was instrumental in bringing the world of competitive videogaming to the attention of the general public.

"When *Life* magazine issued its January 1983 edition, which reviewed the year 1982 in pictures, it included the famous photograph of world record holders standing with their arcade machines outside Twin Galaxies," says Walter, fondly recalling the golden age of coin-ops. "For each individual gamer, they had a little picture of them with their game and they looked like trading cards. That planted a seed in my mind…"

Trading cards featuring sporting greats are a long-established tradition in both America and the UK – perhaps you can recall swapping football cards in the playground before the dinner ladies called you inside because it was spitting – but a set of cards championing gaming heroes was something new. Prohibitively high production costs back then meant the idea had to germinate in the dark recesses of Walter's mind until modern technology and the resulting cut in printing prices allowed it to finally blossom. In 2009, to commemorate the launch of the Twin Galaxies International Videogame Hall Of Fame, the first 50 trading cards were issued, followed two years later by over a hundred more 'Superstars of 2011' cards. The collection has now grown to over 1500 and the scope has widened beyond high scorers to recognise all who have contributed to the wonderful world of gaming.

"As well as world champions and tournament winners, we include game designers, game artists, game musicians, voice actors, even videogame journalists," laughs Walter, making team **Retro Gamer** blush. "All this applies to the world of pinball and home computer gaming, too. The industry is so big and so rich and has all these people, these colourful threads, working together. That's the story of the videogame age and that's the story of these cards."



» Your correspondent discusses swapsies with Walter Day.

At the Florida Freeplay event where we met up with Walter, new cards were issued acknowledging historic high scores on *Lunar Lander*, Jon Stoodley's recent 'Perfect *Pac-Man*' performance and Greydon Clark, director of cult B-movie, *Joysticks*, illustrating the broad spectrum of those honoured in the collection. On Walter's stand, an array of rare cards are on offer for sale, along with binders for collectors, while he gives away handfuls of new cards to any attendees that show interest.

"I do it as a labour of love," Walter grins. "I just love creating the cards. It honours the culture and it's my gift to future generations. Ralph Baer was being interviewed right near the end of his life and he suddenly picked up the trading card we'd printed to honour him and said, 'Isn't this amazing? I never dreamed I'd be on a trading card!'"

To find out more about this fascinating project, visit thewalterdaycollection.com to peruse the gallery. Happy trading! *









"I just love creating the cards. It honours the culture and it's my gift to future generations"
Walter Day

ROYAL FLUSH

Though some UK gamers have been immortalised in card form, including *Missile Command* champion Tony Temple and Greg '*Buster Bros.*' Mott, Walter is eager to include more representatives from this side of the pond. "Britain is a very important part of the story," he assures us. "A lot of British champions have not yet been acknowledged on the trading cards, lots of important game designers and people instrumental in founding the coin-op gaming industry, game artists, event organisers… lots of people in Great Britain deserve to be on a card and I'd like to make that happen!"

And with your help, it will. Walter has asked for **Retro Gamer** readers to decide on five Brits to appear on the next edition of trading cards. Visit our forums retrogamer.net/forum to vote on who should be honoured. And don't forget, videogame journalists can be included. Remember that.

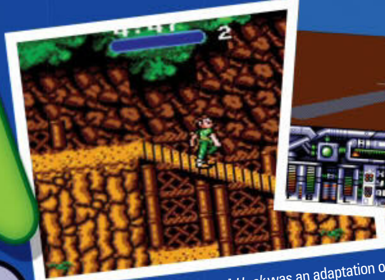
FROM THE ARCHIVES:

21ST CENTURY ENTERTAINMENT

When Hewson Consultants closed its doors in 1991 British gamers everywhere were mourning the loss one of their favourite software houses. But it wouldn't be the end of Andrew Hewson and his ventures into videogames, as Kieren Hawken discovers…

The year was 1991 and videogame industry veteran and entrepreneur Andrew Hewson had put the much-loved publishers of games such as *Zynaps*, *Uridium* and *Nebulus* into liquidation. Hewson Consultants could no longer compete with the big-hitters in the software market and their deep pockets. The price of making a videogame had risen exponentially and Andrew had felt the pinch, he was tired and had lost the will to compete. "I was very worn down by the time it all happened," he tells us. "Our German distributor had invited me up to London to his hotel suite and then told me he couldn't pay his bills and was going bust. If I'd been in a better frame of mind I'd have battled on and almost certainly survived. But I decided not to. It was not my finest hour, definitely something I regret." Another decision that Andrew now regrets is not making the move into the then ever-growing console market, something that just didn't interest him at the time. "The problem with the consoles was that you couldn't just get on and play with them. You had to talk to all sorts of middlemen to get hold of the kit and so on. I couldn't be bothered, it didn't suit my style – the creative edge disappears. So we were just happy licensing a few of our games out to other people." This sad story of regret, money and missed opportunities would probably lead you to think that Andrew was done with the videogames industry and some other new venture was round the corner… you would be half-correct in that assumption.

Andrew just couldn't leave it all behind, though, and a chance encounter with a familiar face would make him quickly rethink his exit from the industry, as Andrew explains, "A couple of weeks after I had put the company into liquidation a friend approached me and asked me how much it would cost to start it all up again." I came up with a figure and he said, 'That doesn't sound too much.' He found two other investors and I put up some money in to match them and away we went!" 21st Century Entertainment was born, the name chosen to signify a new era in videogaming. Although



» [Game Gear] *Hook* was an adaptation of the Spielberg film of the same name.







» [Amiga] The *Pinball* series was a big success for 21st Century Entertainment. This is the sequel, *Pinball Fantasies*.

“A friend approached me and asked me how much it would cost to start it all up again. I came up with a figure and he said, ‘That doesn’t sound too much’”
Andrew Hewson

Andrew’s previous company, Hewson, had long since moved into the 16-bit generation it had still been very much known as an 8-bit computer publisher. This new name would show that Andrew had moved away from the past, embraced the future and was ready provide new products for the now very well-established 16-bit computers and consoles. Although a basic plan was there to attack this market, Andrew was yet to decide how they would actually do it. “I was still traumatised by what had happened,” Andrew says ruefully. “I was struggling to think coherently but my co-investors were enormously supportive. For the first year the name of the game was survival but in the back of my mind was the idea of finding a niche and exploiting it.” The early years of 21CE saw its team finish up and publish many of the projects and sequels left over from the Hewson days while Andrew worked out a battle plan. “We only wanted to do this to a limited extent,” explains Andrew. “The Hewson back catalogue consisted mostly of 8-bit titles and it would have been wrong to try to squeeze too much from them.” The legacy of Hewson’s games was so big that it only seemed natural that there would be some crossover, though, and many of 21CE’s own staff were big fans of the former company. “I used to look at Hewson’s C64 games and swoon at them,” enthused 21CE producer Stewart Gilray. “But, on the other hand, seeing and playing games like *Firelord* on Speccy made it alright! I also remember when it was announced that Dominic Robinson was doing the Speccy version of *Zynaps*, and he did some crazy stuff that made it look *really* colourful. They were very exciting times!”

It wouldn’t be long until Andrew found exactly what he was looking for, that one big game that would put his new company on the map and shape the future of 21st Century Entertainment. Enter stage left a then-little-known Swedish company called Digital Illusions Creative Entertainment, or DICE for short. Co-founder Fredrik Liljegren first recalls how the company came about. “DICE was formed in the summer of 1988 when Andreas Axelsson, Olof

TIMELINE

- **1991** 21st Century Entertainment is formed out of the ashes of Hewson Consultants.
- **1992** DICE’s first game, *Pinball Dreams*, is released, selling over 650,000 units.
- **1993** Spidersoft’s *Cliffhanger* game was very poor, but the film was a huge success.
- **1994** 21CE release its very first cartridge game, *Pinball Fantasies* for the Jaguar.
- **1995** *Pinball Illusions*, the last collaboration between DICE and 21CE is published.
- **1996** *Synnergist* is released, 21CE’s first non-pinball game for two years, and its last.
- **1997** Most of its current projects are put on hold while it re-evaluates the market.
- **1998** A decision is made to shut down the UK and European part of the business.
- **2000** The last remaining part of 21CE, the US division, is shut down.
- **2002** *Pinball Madness 4* is released for PC including several games by 21CE.
- **2009** *Pinball Fantasies* makes a triumphant return with its release on iOS.



» [Commodore 64] A conversion of *Pinball Dreams* was in development for the Commodore 64 but was never finished or released.



» [Game Gear] Spidersoft's Game Gear version of *Cliffhanger* is very different to the 16-bit games.



» [Amiga] *Zarathrusta* was a highly-rated take on the *Gravitar*-type of game that was exclusive to the Amiga.



» [Amiga] *Marvin's Marvelous Adventure* was 21CE's attempt to copy popular console platformers of the time.

"It seemed like an 'easy' game to make, although it actually took us four years to develop!"

Fredrik Liljegren

IN THE KNOW

- Over 650,000 copies of *Pinball Dreams* were sold in the first year of release.
- Pinball innovators DICE are still in the industry today, producing hugely successful videogames in the *Star Wars Battlefront*, *Mirror's Edge* and *Battlefield* series.
- 21st Century Entertainment released several sequels to popular Hewson games.
- The company's later years saw it specialise in producing realistic pinball games.
- First-party development studio Spidersoft boasted a client list, including Sony Imagesoft, Core Design, THQ, Psygnosis, Tecmagik, Gametek and Sega.
- Although 21CE's games were released across ten different formats it specialised in titles for the Amiga and PC.
- The Spidersoft studio went on to become Rockstar Lincoln.
- Agreements were put in place to bundle the pinball games with several PC's and productivity packages to increase awareness of the brand. It worked.

Gustafsson, Ulf Mandorff and I were spending some time at my parents cottage along with other members of demo group The Silents," he tells us. "We saw a pinball table image the Danish part of The Silents had been working on but choose not to do anything with it at that time. After some thinking, based on this and our deep interest in real pinball, it made us decide to start developing a pinball game that summer. Due to us all having full-time jobs and being in school we did this in our spare time. It also seemed like an 'easy' game to make, although it actually took us four years to develop! The company as we know it today was not formed until spring 1992 when the first game *Pinball Dreams* shipped and at this time Markus Nyström has joined the company as well." We asked Fredrik to go back to that time and tell us all about how the relationship with Andrew Hewson and 21CE came about. "We met with 21st Century Entertainment for the first time in 1990 at the ECTS game show, showing them an early version of *Pinball Dreams*. We returned the next year in 1991 and met further with 21CE and started negotiating an agreement, which was signed that Autumn. We were aware of the other games that Hewson had been working on before and were big fans." Andrew remembers the meeting ,too. "We had met Frederik and his team at a trade show, and it was obvious, to us, that they had the makings of a very special product from the first moment, so we signed *Pinball Dreams* almost immediately."

This was obviously a big moment for 21CE and a turning point in the future of the company, so we had to ask Andrew if he knew at that moment if the future of the company would be all about the world of pinball. "Very much so," he hastily replied. "But after the pain we had been through, I was determined not to take anything for granted. It was only once *Pinball Dreams* took the market by storm that I allowed myself to settle on a pinball strategy. The first task was to commission an improved sequel, which would become *Pinball Fantasies*. Once that was on the way, DICE made it clear that it had ambitions way beyond working with us, which was fair enough given how talented they were, so we agreed that they would create *Pinball Illusions* in due course and then we would both go our own way. In the meantime I set about creating another programming team (at Spidersoft) to write pinball products for us and those too came through eventually." As the producer on their smash hit pinball games Stewart worked very closely with them and even helped port over some of their Amiga code to other platforms. "I actually took



» [PC DOS] Graphical adventure *Synergist* was the last non-pinball game that was published by 21st Century Entertainment.

DEFINING GAMES



NEBULUS 2: POGO A GOGO 1991

■ Another Hewson Consultants sequel to be released by 21CE, *Nebulus 2* was an Amiga-exclusive (although an Atari ST version was announced but never released), which was surprising at the time, given the success of the first game and how many different formats it appeared on. The core gameplay was almost the same with you climbing each tower while avoiding the bad guys, but now you also have to repair each one before it topples too. While *Pogo A Gogo* lacks the wow factor of the original game, the gameplay still holds up just as well and it was very positively received by the press of the time.



RUBICON 1992

■ An all-action run-and-gun with some gorgeous graphics and stunning animation, *Rubicon* is a big departure from the pinball games that made 21CE famous. Released for the C64, Amiga and Atari ST, *Rubicon* is set in a post-apocalyptic world inhabited by mutants and sees the player making their way through the wastelands of Russia to try and defuse a nuclear reactor before it explodes. The action is relentless at times and requires a seasoned gamer to progress, as is often the case with games of this type, but it is rewarding enough to make you stick with it. A planned sequel was sadly cancelled while in development.



DELIVERANCE: STORMLORD II 1992

■ The first *Stormlord* game was one of Hewson's biggest hits so it was only natural that a sequel would follow. The 8-bit versions of *Deliverance* were released by Hewson just before they went under but the superior 16-bit iterations had to wait until 21st Century Entertainment was formed before they were published. Raffaele Cecco's sequel was very much more of the same, but that is no bad thing. A vast platforming adventure where you must rescue all the fairies before they fall to their death, it's probably best known for the quite extreme challenge that it offers up.

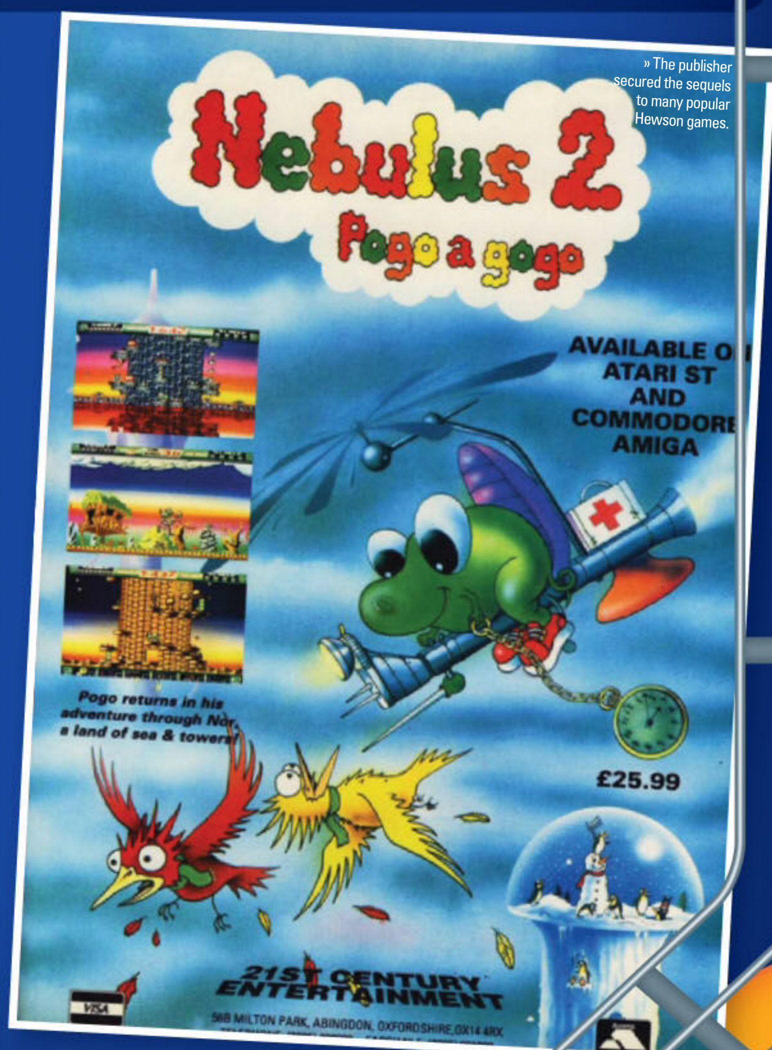


PINBALL FANTASIES 1992

■ It might not have been the first game in 21CE's now-legendary series of pinball titles but it was undoubtedly the most successful and best remembered one. Featuring four great tables, all with their own unique theme, it's been released across an impressive eleven different formats with several other being planned but unreleased, such as the very attractive C64 port. *Pinball Fantasies* would become one of the best-selling games of its generation thanks to its incredibly realistic physics, stunning high colour visuals and awesome soundtrack. It still holds up incredibly well to this day.

a look at the *Pinball Dreams* source code before I started working for them in-house," he reveals. "They'd hired a company to look at doing an Atari ST version, however the programmer spent a few days and had nothing but crashes. I ended up spending a small amount (two to three hours) having a crack at fixing it and discovered that he'd left an Amiga mouse call in there, which obviously wouldn't work on the ST. So I removed that and got the game running, but with nothing on-screen. That then grew to become the Atari Falcon version, which I did with an old friend of mine Martin MacKenzie. I got to know those DICE guys quite well, especially Fredrik Liljegren and Andreas Axelsson and they're still good friends today."

The success of *Pinball Dreams* and, even more so, the sequel *Pinball Fantasies* brought up another opportunity, the chance to get into the console market. This was something Andrew had missed out on in his Hewson days and was something he was looking to fix despite his previous reservations. One of the first people to court 21CE for a conversion was Atari, impressed with the Falcon port of *Pinball Dreams* it saw the sequel as just the game it wanted on its new 64-bit Jaguar console. Stewart explained to us how this came about. "I was involved very early doors with the Atari agreement," he reveals. "Sam Tramiel had actually come to the 21st Century offices a good while before the Jaguar was launched and we signed an agreement to do a pinball game for it almost straight away. I actually remember driving to Atari in Slough quite a lot and meeting up with Alistair Bodin and Darryl Still there. I was also at the launch event at the London Planetarium as well, that was a lot of fun." Sadly the Jaguar wasn't the success that 21CE hoped it would be. As well as Stewart, Andrew was also a big fan of the hardware, "The programmers and I were very impressed with the Atar Jaguar," he says. "We really thought it was the right kind of machine at the right kind of price to follow on from the 16-bit consoles. The hardware was really impressive and with the added CD drive it really seemed like it could compete. Sadly Atari didn't have the financial clout and, given some previous embarrassments, the goodwill to launch it successfully." *Pinball Fantasies* did go on to also receive ports to the CD32, SNES, Game Boy and PlayStation – so the decision to take it to the consoles worked out in the end. But, saying that, Andrew still feels that it never really exploited this market as it should have. "Why? Stubbornness, perhaps. A lack of self-confidence possibly. Certainly, I refused to accept all the risks involved," he admits. "Game development is not easy and I thought it was madness to commit to huge production and marketing costs – costs which were dictated by corporate bodies on the other of side of the planet. I wanted to



» The publisher secured the sequels to many popular Hewson games.



» [Atari ST] *Rubicon* is a graphically outstanding run-and-gun title that wouldn't seem out of place in the arcades.



» *Pinball Fantasies*' success saw it ported to numerous home consoles and computers.

spend the limited funds available to us on product development because, in the end, the product is the only thing that counts. I decided that I wasn't going to play a game where the odds were stacked against us. I wanted to play a game which I thought we could win." This explains why we only ever saw quite straightforward ports rather than original products on the console formats.

From speaking to people involved in the company it seems that Andrew's key focus was his work ethic, something that was carried on to everyone he worked with. "This is certainly true," remarked Fredrik. "The second game in the series (*Pinball Fantasies*) was developed in just three months in an apartment in Seattle, a big difference from the four-year development of the first game!" Stewart, seemingly wanting to go one up, offered up this incredible story of his own: "I remember when we were finishing of *Pinball Construction Kit*. It was being worked on at Spidersoft in Lincoln (now Rockstar Lincoln), I went up on the Friday from Oxfordshire, and ended up working around the clock all the way through the weekend, then leaving there at 5am Monday morning to get the master CD to EMI replication in Swindon by 9am. I made it, just, but ended up going home to Faringdon and sleeping the rest of the day!" When we quizzed Andrew on this he was pretty modest about his achievements. "I wanted to write a book, or books, in order to prove to myself that I could, so I did. I wanted to make games, so I did. I wanted to specialise in a genre and become an industry leader, so I did. The books, the games and all the others were all different ways of testing myself, and to do that you had to work

21ST CENTURY ENTERTAINMENT

THE DNA OF

STUNNING VISUALS

■ One of the first things you notice about any 21CE game is how visually stunning they are. It was very important to those within the company that the teams pushed every machine to its limits. What made it even better is that it backed these fantastic graphics up with equally impressive gameplay.

HARDWARE OPTIMISATION

■ In an interview Andrew Hewson was once asked why 21CE's still targeted lower-end PC's with its games rather than aiming them at the latest high-tech computers, and he replied by saying he wanted the games to reach the largest audience possible, showing what really could be done with great coding.

PINBALL WIZARDS

■ When you think of retro pinball games then 21st Century Entertainment is probably the first name that springs to mind, or at least one of its games. Nobody perfected the genre better and offered up the kind of realism you could only get by entering a real arcade with a bag of ten pence pieces.

PACK IT IN!

■ One of the best ways to get your games to the largest audience is by getting them into a console or computer pack-in. Andrew Hewson already knew this and so struck lucrative deals with Commodore and a number of PC manufactures to get 21CE's titles included with them, helping create great brand awareness.

SCANDINAVIAN SCOUTS

■ The legendary developers DICE were not the only great discovery to come out of Northern Europe, Andrew Hewson also discovered several other great coding groups. Among them were Twisted Minds, Swedish creators of Rubicon, and The Whiz Kids, which was behind *Zarathrusta*.

THE SPIDERSOFT STORY

An insight into 21st Century Entertainment's acquisition of Spidersoft

The first thing you need at any software company is people to code the games, so the acquisition of Spidersoft in 1992 was a very wise one indeed. The Lincoln-based studio already had plenty of experience in porting games for various publishers having done conversions of titles such as *Supercars* for Gremlin and *Indiana Jones And The Fate Of Atlantis* for LucasArts. As well as taking over from DICE as the key development studio for all of 21st Century Entertainment's pinball titles, Spidersoft did conversion work for companies such as Sony Imagesoft, THQ, Psygnosis and Core Design. It gained an excellent reputation for turning around projects very quickly and after the demise of 21CE it became Tarantula Studios before eventually being acquired by the well-known company behind the *Grand Theft Auto* series and being renamed Rockstar Lincoln. The studio is now the dedicated quality assurance and software localisation studio for Rockstar, responsible for game testing and translating games developed by the company's other studios.



» [ZX Spectrum] Hewson published the original 8-bit version of *Stormlord 2* but the 16-bit version were released by 21CE.



» [Game Boy] First party studio Spidersoft coded the Game Boy version of the popular *Chuck Rock* for Core Design.



» [Atari Falcon] Originally programmed for the Atari ST by Stewart Gilray, the game was upgraded to take full advantage of the 32-bit successor the *Falcon*.

hard." Fredrik feels that he learned so much more than just a great work ethic from Andrew Hewson, though, and doesn't feel their relationship should be understated. "We learned that finding the right partner, someone that is as invested in your product as you are is critical to success, something that was clear from the start we had found in Andrew and 21st Century Entertainment. They also gave us artistic and creative freedom, all they were involved with was the box design, this really allowed us to express ourselves." With all this in mind we were interested to know why Andrew decided to give it up once more and leave it all behind for a second time. "We stopped trading by mutual consent and everyone moved on to other things. I felt we had proved our point and the other investors were also looking to exit. The internet was beginning to make an impact and I personally wanted to spend my time getting involved in all the new technology involved around it, not much else to say."

So what is the legacy that 21st Century Entertainment have left on the industry? As probably its most prolific contributor we turned to Fredrik for his thoughts first. "We put in a lot of hard work and love into these games and it still feels great that they are so fondly remembered by so many people," he concludes. "It's great to have had success like that so early in our careers." There is no doubting that DICE set a new standard for pinball games while working with 21CE and the legacy of these games can still be seen today, while 21CE have gone DICE have gone from strength to strength on the back of this early relationship. Stewart offered up some interesting thoughts of his own too. "Unfortunately I think the impact of the company is less today than it deserves to be. The people that remember Hewson/21CE are probably at the top end of the game player spectrum as it were. But I think in our hearts we still remember those games, perhaps the Hewson ones more so, with great respect and admiration, and rightly so." Andrew himself was surprisingly even more downbeat with his own view. "There isn't one of any substance in my opinion. Let's be honest with ourselves. Many, many things come and go in this world and the very large majority leave nothing behind. That may be sad but it is undoubtedly true. The company came, made an impact and went, leaving some precious memories with a few of us. The legacy is those memories that we hold." Andrew is not the only one with memories though as the continuing admiration of the games he produced is still there for all to see. So it would have been rude not to ask him if he ever wanted to make it a third time lucky in the videogames industry "Honestly no. I have seen it, done it and got the T-shirt. Life is too much fun and all that is new is too exciting to make going back to the past attractive. Onwards and upwards!" ✱

> **"The company came, made an impact and went, leaving precious memories with a few of us"**
> Andrew Hewson

WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

We discover what happened to key members of 21st Century Entertainment and DICE and where they all ended up…



ANDREW HEWSON

■ Andrew's career is well documented and the upcoming book, *Hints & Tips For Videogame Pioneers*, will expand on his storied career in the industry even more. After his days running 21st Century Entertainment he chose to leave the industry behind and set up an accountancy firm. But his son, Rob, has carried on the legacy by becoming an award-winning games producer in his own right, making his father very proud.



STEWART GILRAY

■ From his early days as a producer at 21CE, Stewart has gone from strength to strength in the industry. He went on to take up similar roles at Grolier Interactive, Revolution Software, Runecraft Ltd. and Binary9 Studios before becoming CEO of Just Add Water, the studio behind the recent return of Abe with *Oddworld: New 'N' Tasty*. He continues to run JAW, creating games for all the modern platforms.



FREDRIK LILJEGREN

■ Fredrik left DICE in 2000 just after it took over Refraction Games. From there he went on to form RedJade Inc., one of the pioneers of touchscreen gaming on mobile phones. Unfortunately this project was short-lived and in 2001 he returned to DICE to manage its Canadian studio. In 2014 he left again to found several companies involved in 3D art and mobile gaming before becoming the director of system software at Nvdia in June 2015.

ZZOOM

Before its spectacular crash in 1984, Imagine Software had built a reputation founded on glossy presentation and unparalleled promotional skills – whatever the cost. Yet it did produce a few notable games in the process, including this fun air combat shoot-'em-up. Graeme Mason chats to coder John Gibson



» John Gibson is still working in the games industry today.



» *Zzoom*'s design document, the result of a 'head-banging' session between John, David Lawson and Eugene Evans.

Imagine, if not the most successful in terms of sales, was certainly one of the better known software houses of the early-Eighties, and it boasted an impressively busy rate of releases, if nothing else. After the success of shoot-'em-up *Arcadia* in 1982, Imagine, created by former members of Bug-Byte, released a number of games in 1983 that, while varying in quality, all offered original and enticing concepts, bolstered by professional and attractive covers and advertising. Among these was *Molar Maul*, the first game by programmer John Gibson. Essentially a teeth-cleaning simulator, *Molar Maul* had the player controlling an over-worked toothbrush in its mission to keep rot and decay away from a graphically-impressive mouth.

With Imagine tackling other seemingly mundane tasks such as gardening (*Pedro*) and tidying toys (*Ah Diddums*), co-owner David Lawson was keen to develop a more conventional title. "It was Dave who wanted an action game of some sort," begins John, "and the final design was the outcome of a head-banging session involving me, Dave and Eugene Evans." The result was the 'design document', a handwritten brief containing a mass of ideas and drawings to demonstrate how the game should look. Many elements from this document did not make it into the finished game – such as the decorative seagulls – although the look and graphics were largely maintained throughout. "I suppose the biggest issue was me coming out of that meeting and thinking [how the f**k] am I going to write this?" John laughs. "Remember, at this point I was still a programming novice and the task appeared very daunting." John's first objective was to create the game's engine, the nuts and bolts that would drive each level. "The prospects of achieving the desired result then became a lot simpler," he continues, "although there was a lot of that document that didn't make it into the game simply because the design was unachievable on a 48k Spectrum. But then Dave Lawson always liked to think big."

Zzoom's graphics and speed drew praise upon release; fast-action first-person games were a rarity on home computers in 1983. "The 3D effect was achieved by drawing a sequence of bitmaps in which all the images were the same, but each successive image was slightly larger than the previous one," explains John. "Each image had to be drawn onto graph paper and this led to inconsistencies in the image sequence. Check out the palm trees in the desert level – the leaves appear to flap up and down!" Nevertheless, *Zzoom*'s display was impressive despite the minimalistic backgrounds, unavoidable because so much memory was required for the game's sprite bitmaps.

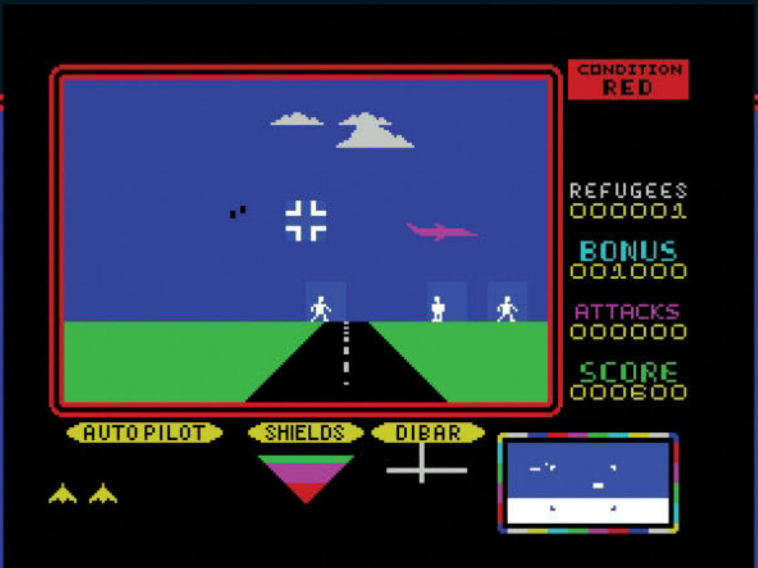


Apart from simply squeezing the ambitious design into the Spectrum, one of the biggest issues John faced was tracking bugs. As completion of *Zzoom* neared, one in particular occupied his mind constantly. "The program kept crashing whenever you shot an aeroplane," he explains. "The crash had me stumped for days and I was getting desperate to find the reason for it. It was constantly on my mind and I guess I must have got to the stage where I was dreaming about it, because the reason came to me while I was in my sleep! It turned out to be a simple problem with a

> **"At this point I was still a programming novice and the task appeared very daunting"**
> John Gibson



» [ZX Spectrum] Planes are replaced by tanks and the ground skimmer's missiles are armed in the desert level.



» [ZX Spectrum] What are you doing? Stop waving and get running!

simple solution, as is the case with most bugs. When the bullet sprite and the aeroplane collided, the sprite was supposed to change into an explosion sprite, but the transition was incomplete, so you had an explosion that thought it was a bullet. That was what was making the game crash when it tried to render it."

The gameplay and plot to *Zzoom* contains a vague political background. The player commands a craft known as a Ground Skimmer, a sophisticated machine complete armed with missiles and machine guns. A remorseless enemy is carrying out genocide upon thousands of refugees and it's your task to save as many as possible. Each level contains several refugees, players were charged with protecting them as they traverse the playing area. Oddly, though, the player could choose to shoot refugees. "I never



» [ZX Spectrum] John Gibson's self-deprecating humour is evident in the high-score table.

thought of it but, yes, I probably should've punished the player for that," admits John. "I thought people would do their upmost to avoid shooting them. I do remember showing the latest version to Eugene, who then proceeded to deliberately strafe the refugees, to everyone's amusement," laughs John.

Upon completion, John demonstrated *Zzoom* to Imagine management. "They were over the moon," he says proudly, "and expected it to be a big seller and propel Imagine further into the limelight – which is what it proved to do." Sales were helped by an excellent cover from artist Steve Blower (who also contributed the game's motto, 'Nomen Ludi' – a rough Latin interpretation of Imagine catchphrase 'The Name Of The Game') and Imagine's marketing prowess, mainly Mark Butler. A key addition was the extra 'z' at the start of the name, designed to attract attention to the title. "I was very pleased with the game," says John, "and in awe of what I had achieved technically in only my second attempt at writing a game for the Spectrum. My next game [*Stonkers*] was an even greater achievement and I began to believe there was nothing I couldn't do on a Spectrum. Eventually, naivety gave way to reality!" But other than his obvious pleasure at delivering an excellent game, how does *Zzoom*'s creator look back on it today? "*Zzoom* taught me object-orientated programming before I knew such a thing existed," he says. "The engine was based on the concept of creating logical units, or objects, as and when they were needed and destroying them when they had served their purpose. At the time it was simply an efficient way of utilising the memory." Incredibly, *Zzoom*'s engine became the beginnings of a system John would use for many years to come and was last used by him for the 2001 GBA game, *Wacky Stackers*. And more importantly, *Zzoom*, along with *Molar Maul*, *Stonkers* and John's Denton Designs work, would all help cement his place as a mainstay of the industry for many years to come. *



» [ZX Spectrum] Enemy subs would ram the refugees in their little boats with little remorse.



» [ZX Spectrum] Lose all your shields and it was game over.

EUGENE SAYS…

John Gibson's former colleague and coder Eugene Evans recalls working with him

"It was so long ago, but even back then John was old! But I have to say it's hard to remember a time when he wasn't there – he fitted in from day one. It was so hard to find assembly coders at the time and it was apparent that John was very talented and a way better coder than I was. He created great games. You see many casual games like *Molar Maul* on phones and tablets today, but there wasn't much before it that was as original. With *Zzoom*, as with other games, most ideas were the result of brainstorming, but at the time when one coder basically did everything, the real detail came through when the coding took place. I remember when it came to debugging, John would alternate between seething in silence or kicking a bag of dead Spectrums around the room, depending on how long he'd been trying to vanquish that particular bug. He always took them down in time, though."



IN THE KNOW

» **PUBLISHER:** Imagine
» **DEVELOPER:** John Gibson
» **RELEASED:** 1983
» **PLATFORM:** ZX Spectrum
» **PLATFORM:** Flying Combat

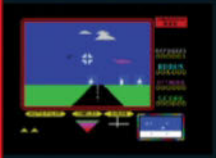


DEVELOPER HIGHLIGHTS

MOLAR MAUL
SYSTEM: ZX Spectrum
YEAR: 1983

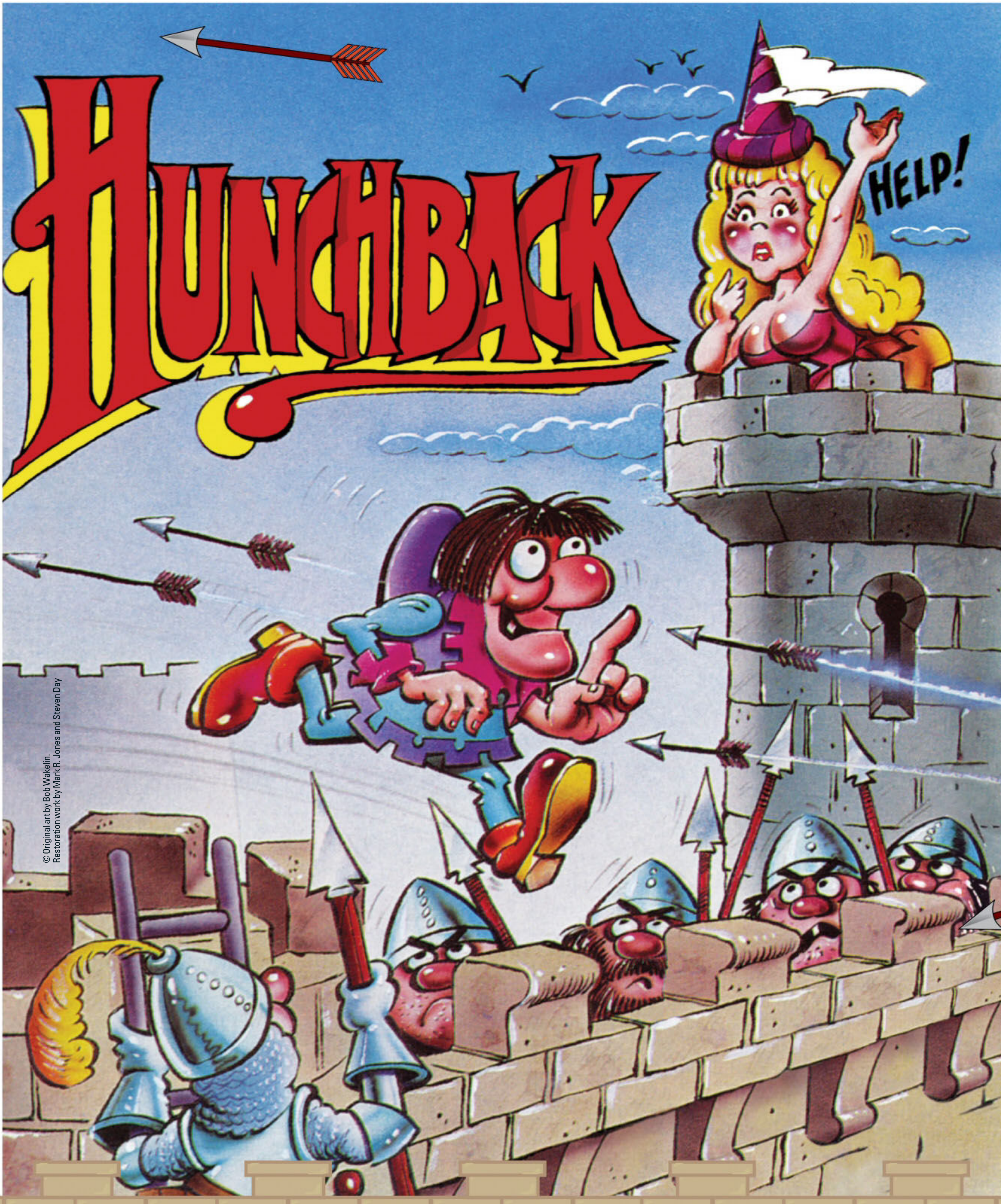
STONKERS
SYSTEM: ZX Spectrum
YEAR: 1983

FRANKIE GOES TO HOLLYWOOD (PICTURED)
SYSTEM: Various
YEAR: 1985



ZZOOM 101

■ This early Imagine game is an excellent blaster where you must protect refugees by shooting down as many enemies as possible. In addition to being incredibly addictive and fast-paced, it's also a stunning technical showcase, highlighting just what's possible on the supposedly humble Spectrum. A truly classic shooter.



© Original art by Bob Wakelin.
Restoration work by Mark R. Jones and Steven Day

The bells! The bells! For gamers of the Eighties Quasimodo certainly rings a bell, stirring memories of the hit coin-op Hunchback and the home versions that followed. Martyn Carroll looks back at the bell-ringer's gaming legacy

Hunchback the videogame sees Quasimodo racing along the rooftop of Notre Dame Cathedral on a quest to rescue Esmeralda. The game may have been based on the classic French novel *The Hunchback Of Notre-Dame*, but its origins were rooted in the UK – specifically the North West of England.

The original arcade game was developed by Century Electronics, which was founded in 1979 and based in Oldham, Greater Manchester. Century's hardware was dubbed the CVS, or Convertible Video System, as it was based around a motherboard which accepted game modules. It was effectively a coin-op console system – operators could swap out the current game without replacing the whole unit.

Century developed more than a dozen games for the system, many of which were clones of the arcade hits of the day. *Hunchback* was released in Summer 1983 and became a hit in its own right, with the challenging gameplay keeping punters engrossed as they tried to make it further and further along the wall. The game was reportedly the number one earning coin-op across Europe in late 1983 and also performed strongly in the US. To capitalise on its success Century produced *Hunchback* conversion kits for existing *Donkey Kong*, *Scramble* and *Galaxian* machines.

The success of *Hunchback* was detected just down the road in central Manchester, where Ocean Software was looking to legitimise its act. Ocean had already released unofficial conversions of several coin-ops,



» Paul Owens, pictured in the BBC's *Commercial Breaks* programme about the fortunes of Ocean and Imagine.

including *Donkey Kong* and *Missile Command*, and made *Hunchback* its first proper licence. So Quasimodo travelled from Oldham to Manchester, via Wigan. Ocean's Paul Owens explains, "Before he came to Ocean, David Collier worked for an arcade machine supplier fixing the boards and he remained friends with the owner. We would pop over to the warehouse in Wigan and check out any new arcade games before they shipped. On one visit the *Hunchback* board had arrived. We were on the lookout for games that would be suitable for the Spectrum and Commodore – simple concept, good gameplay and, above all, could be written using existing code to save time. *Hunchback* fit the bill."

Ocean's founders David Ward and Jon Woods visited Century and acquired the licence for £3,000 – loose change compared to what it would pay for future licences. The firm then set about converting the game to as many different computers as possible, beginning ▶

Hunchback Fact

It's believed that *Hunchback* was originally created as a *Robin Hood* game and the English outlaw was swapped for Quasimodo late on in the development.

"We were on the lookout for games that would be suitable for the Spectrum and Commodore. Hunchback fit the bill" Paul Owens



» [Arcade] Strong shades of *Pitfall!* as Quasimodo heroically swings over a flaming pit.



» [Arcade] If you dawdle the knight will scale the wall and even build a bridge to get you!

▶ with what it saw as the biggest platforms: the VIC-20, Commodore 64 and the Spectrum. "Christian Urquhart and I worked as a team," says Paul, referring to the Spectrum version. "Christian completed the front menu sections and I worked on the game aspects. I already had most of the code for things like key control, sprite display and collision detection from my previous game, *Kong*. It took around three weeks to get most of the game complete but the graphics weren't right and the gameplay was weak. It took a further two weeks to put things right."

On the whole, Ocean's numerous conversions were fairly accurate and well-received. The game sold strongly too, with *Computer And Videogames* magazine revealing that it was the UK's sixth best-selling release of 1984. Effective marketing from Ocean helped; the game was advertised in print and even on television in the Granada region. Century and Ocean contemplated sequels.

Hunchback Fact

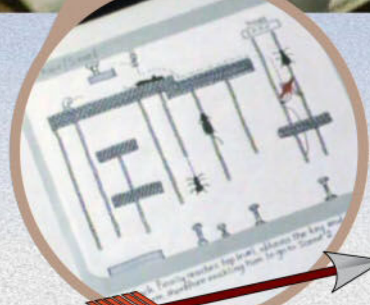
Punchy from Mr Micro was one of many unofficial home versions of *Hunchback*. It was originally titled *Hunchy* before being renamed to avoid licensing issues.



» [Arcade] Quasi's beloved Esmeralda awaits him at the end of the wall. This is the toughest screen, of course.

Century, in collaboration with a firm called Seatongrove, developed two more Quasimodo coin-ops: *HERO* (which, believe it or not, stood for *Hunchback Esmeralda Rescue Operation*) and *Hunchback Olympic* (also known as *HB's Olympics* and *Herbie At The Olympics*). The original *Hunchback* was clearly inspired by Atari's *Pitfall!* and to a lesser extent *Donkey Kong*, yet the follow-ups were blatant clones of existing titles. *HERO* was a maze game in the mould of Konami's *Tutankham*, with only a 'ring the bells' finale and a fleeting glimpse of Esmeralda linking it to the original. It was fast and very engrossing but more of a cash-in than a proper follow-up. *Hunchback Olympic*, meanwhile, was a copy of Konami's *Track & Field* with Quasi awkwardly competing in a series of sporting events. The coin-op wasn't a common sight in arcades and would have probably sunk without trace were it not for Software Projects licensing the game and releasing a version for the C64.


» The Ocean team discusses *Hunchback II*. From left to right: Paul Owens, Tony Pomfret and Bill Barna.



Ocean wisely avoided Century's games and pressed ahead with its own sequel. "*Hunchback* sold well so David Ward said let's do version two," explains Paul, who contributed to the design of the follow-up. "*Hunchback II* took more prep work as we didn't have an arcade game to base the gameplay on." With the rather meaningless subtitle of *Quasimodo's Revenge*, *Hunchback II* saw our hero once again rescuing an imprisoned Esmeralda. Only this time the screens standing in Quasi's way

> "Hunchback sold well so David Ward said let's do version two"
> Paul Owens

A Novel Approach

Other games based on literary classics



WAR OF THE WORLDS

The book (1898): The classic sci-fi novel by HG Wells depicts an alien invasion of the Earth through the eyes of an nameless protagonist. The book has been adapted in various forms.

The game (1982): A 3D-style arcade game from vector graphics expert Tim Skelly. You blast advancing Martian invaders as they try to frazzle you with their lasers and bombs.



TREASURE ISLAND

The book (1883): A children's adventure tale by Robert Louis Stevenson. Armed with a treasure map, young Jim Hawkins sets sail with a motley crew in search of his fortune.

The game (1984): A flick-screen maze game from Mr Micro. Players guide Hawkins around the island, defeating pirates with their own weapons before escaping with the loot.



THE WIZARD OF OZ

The book (1900): Titled *The Wonderful Wizard Of Oz*, the first of L. Frank Baum's fantasy tales about the strange land of Oz. Dorothy and dog Toto are whizzed to Oz by a tornado.

The game (1985): A solid slice of interactive fiction that's based on the book rather than the 1939 film. One of several adventures games by Windham Classics based on well-known novels.



DRACULA

The book (1887): Bram Stoker's legendary tale of Dracula, literature's most famous vampire. Professor Van Helsing and others plot to kill the count and stop the spread of his curse.

The game (1986): A clever and spooky text adventure where you play (initially) as Jonathan Harker as he journeys to Drac's castle. Famously carried a '15' age certificate for its 'gore' screens.



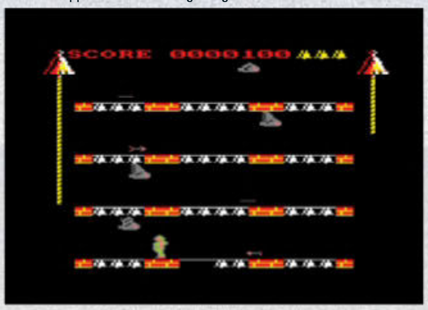
TOM SAWYER

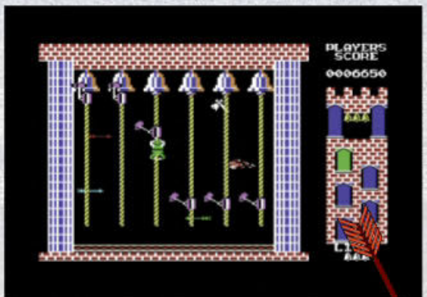
The book (1876): The novel by Mark Twain follows unlikely hero Tom and his best friend Huckleberry Finn as they grow up in a small town on the banks of the Mississippi.

The game (1989): A run-and-jump effort for the NES. Tom battles odd beasts (an octopus, a gorilla etc.) on his mission to rescue Becky Thatcher from Injun Joe. It's all a dream, of course.



» [ZX Spectrum] Loading screen master FD Thorpe drew some scenic graphics for *Hunchback II*, such as the castle wall and buildings seen here.


» [Amstrad CPC] The final screen from the *Hunchback* coin-op makes a belated appearance at the beginning of Ocean's *Hunchback II*.



» [Commodore 64] In the finale to the C64 version Quasi must scale each rope without getting hit. It's a nightmare!

were more varied, with him negotiating a trap-laden and critter-infested belfry.

"David Ward was pushing for more complexity and we now had graphic artists to help," says Paul, "but we were still only allowed a couple of months to complete the game. To satisfy Mr Ward we included addition complexity where it didn't break the capabilities of existing code. I'm not saying that *Manic Miner* influenced the design but I personally liked the game and specifically the gameplay. We were attempting to introduce an aspect of learning to play the game rather than just reacting to events as with the original. We felt that slightly harder initial levels were also required. There were several improvements planned for later levels that never made the game, and we weren't happy about the difficulty progression late in the game, but, as usual, we ran out of time."

Paul once again programmed the Spectrum version, this time with help from Ocean newcomer Mike Webb. Rather than release the game on every computer format under the sun, as with the original, Ocean focused on what would become its three key 8-bit platforms: the Spectrum, the Commodore 64 and the Amstrad CPC. Tony Pomfret and Bill Barna were responsible for the C64 version while Simon Cobb and Joffa Smith handled duties on the CPC.

As the programmers worked hard to hit the release date of November 1984, Ocean began to build anticipation for the sequel. "The new program will have a dozen different screens and will be the most fantastic thing of all time," said David Ward to the press at the time. Due to time constraints the final Spectrum version ended up with six screens and the C64 and CPC versions just five. It certainly wasn't the best thing ever either – it was too difficult overall – but it did review better than the original on the platforms it appeared.

Ocean had no need to pay for TV advertising this time around as the game was heavily promoted in a BBC programme. The now famous- ▶

Hunchback Fact

The *HERO* coin-op was released by Crown Vending in the US as *Hero In The Temple Of Doom* to link it to the second *Indiana Jones* movie.

Bob Wakelin Q&A

A quick chat with the man who illustrated Hunchback for Ocean



What's the story behind the original *Hunchback* artwork? Were you asked to base it on the artwork of the coin-op?
Yeah, I was asked to base the first one on the existing artwork – probably for licensing purposes. I was told to 'tart it up' to look a bit slicker than the original illustration I was sent for reference.

You've mentioned previously that working on it wasn't your favourite job. What aspects didn't you particularly enjoy?
I wasn't fond of the style I was asked to imitate. It's not the kind of thing I would pay any attention to if I was flicking through a magazine.



» Compare the published *Hunchback II* artwork with Bob's alternative, unused illustration.



Was the artwork for *Hunchback II* a case of more of the same, or did you have more freedom as it was an original game?
I originally tried a different approach for *Hunchback II*, hoping I wouldn't have to imitate the same style again – but it got knocked back because David Ward wanted more of the same. It wasn't quite as painful to do because I had more freedom, but I still found it a pain in the ass to work on.

Your artwork for *Hunchback The Adventure* had more of a fantasy-styled theme. Was this better to work on?
I'd completely forgotten I'd even done that *Hunchback* piece until Ocean's Simon Butler drew attention to it by posting it on Facebook! I quite enjoyed that job because I knocked it out really quickly – the artwork was quite small, around A4 size, when most of my pieces at that time were around A3 – and I could have a bit more fun with it. Also, I had got used to working in that style so it was easier to execute.

To find out more about Bob's work visit his Facebook page at bit.ly/bobwfb. To purchase prints go head on over to bit.ly/bobwebay.



» [Arcade] *Hunchback Olympic* was presumably named after *Hyper Olympic*, the Japanese title for *Track & Field*.

Hunchback Fact

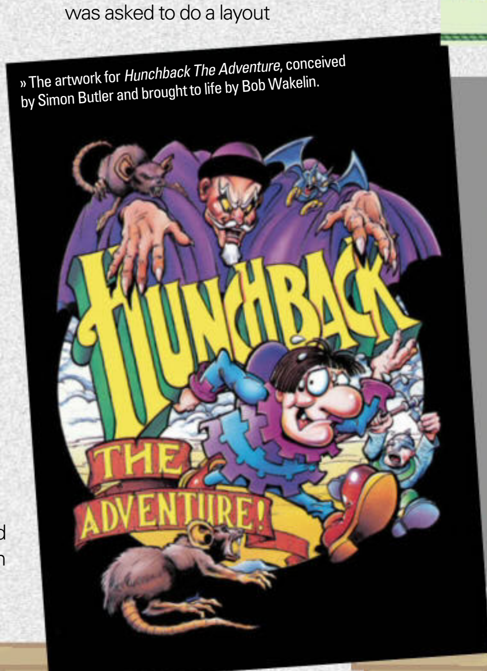
Software Projects advertised *Hunchback At The Olympics* for the Commodore 64 and Spectrum, but it was only released on the C64.

▶ episode of *Commercial Breaks* which aired in December 1984 summed up the contrasting fortunes of the UK software scene, showing Imagine Software going down the pan as Ocean marched on. *Hunchback II* was purported to be Ocean's big hope for Christmas 1984 and the programme even showed the game's design coming together. "The scene where I'm discussing ropes and caterpillars was staged," reveals Paul. "We never had such a design process. It was all about using existing code and the design was down to the programmer."

Hunchback II released late and missed some of the Christmas sales, but it didn't matter as Ocean's *Daley Thompson's Decathlon* was a hit, establishing the firm as a leading software house. In contrast Century Electronics had ceased trading. Further home games looked doubtful too. "*Hunchback III* was considered," says Paul, "but as we had started on the film tie-in strategy, it wasn't considered for long."

In 1986 Ocean did produce a third game in the series, but it was not a platformer as expected. Out of the left field came *Hunchback The Adventure*, a text adventure in the style of Ocean's earlier *The NeverEnding Story*. Like that game, it was created by Ian Weatherburn and Simon Butler, and featured a window above the text which displayed current events. "Ian was determined to milk his N*everEnding Story* engine so we did *Hunchback The Adventure*," says Simon. "He insisted I read the novel by Victor Hugo, which I did, because I was told it was to be a serious adventure. I remember telling him that no-one would be interested in a po-faced adventure by some dead French guy. Ian agreed, mainly because he didn't want to have to read the novel."

Once the tone was decided the pair could crack on with the development. Simon continues: "We broke it down into the usual 'hero rescues girl and overcomes villain storyline', and then created a path through the plot – if you do this then 'A' happens, if you don't then 'B' happens Ian constructed the plot in the engine and broke it down into handy bite-sized pieces of text while I hammered away at the pixels. I spellchecked his storylines and attempted to inject the gags. Once it was done we delivered it to Ocean. I was asked to do a layout for the artwork which would then be rendered professionally by Bob Wakelin and that was that."



» The artwork for *Hunchback The Adventure*, conceived by Simon Butler and brought to life by Bob Wakelin.

Hunchback The Adventure was released for the Spectrum, C64 and CPC. It reviewed well, with commenters praising the humour and also acknowledging that it wasn't the most taxing adventure – which was either a plus or a minus based on the player's questing prowess.

Quasi returned to platforming territory in 1992 with the release of *Super Hunchback* for the Game Boy. It also marked a return to the series for Paul Owens. "I had moved to a producer role in the early-Nineties for the Game Boy products," he says. Ocean had experienced success already on the handheld with *Robocop* and *Parasol Stars*, but as Paul explains, more releases were required. "When we started working with Nintendo we committed to producing a number of titles. There was an investment made in equipment, and we needed to recover this cost. It was a case of John Woods saying, 'We have spent all this money now what can we write?' *Hunchback* was obvious. It was technically feasible, it could be developed quickly with not a huge investment in graphical work, and we had someone available to code."

» [Game Boy] Quasi has to cross a castle moat, as in *Hunchback II*, but at least now he can swim.



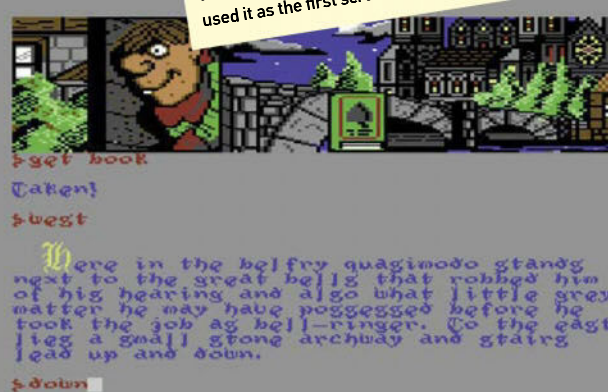
That coder was John O'Brien, best known for the Z80 conversions of *Chase HQ*, and the graphics were drawn by Rob Hemphill. Some solid tunes from Matt Cannon rounded off a pleasant title that had more in common with *Hunchback II*. But the game was nearly closer to the original, according to Paul: "I remember looking at reusing code from the Spectrum version, as the Game Boy is a Z80 machine, but I decided it would take longer to convert than a rewrite."

Despite the title, *Super Hunchback* was never destined for the Super Nintendo. Yet the series did make a appearance in *Pugsley's Scavenger Hunt*. In the 'Crystal Ball' stage, Pugsley is whisked away to a world where he must brave the battlements by jumping over fireballs and spear-thrusting knights.

And with that homage, Quasimodo's adventures end. Yet it may be necessary to go back and flesh out the opening chapter, as we have been tipped off about the whereabouts of the developer who created the original *Hunchback* for Century. Maybe now we can confirm the inspiration behind the game, and whether the rumour about it starting out as a *Robin Hood* title is true. Nothing is confirmed as yet, but let's just say that we have a *hunch*. ✱

Hunchback Fact

The *Hunchback* home versions are missing the final screen where you collect the bells inside the tower. Ocean instead used it as the first screen of *Hunchback II*.



» [Commodore 64] Quasimodo gets verbose in the interactive fiction release *Hunchback The Adventure*.

Conversion Capers

A round-up of the officially-licensed home versions of Hunchback



ZX SPECTRUM

■ A competent and playable version. The graphics are large and colourful (which does mean a fair bit of attribute clash), and all of the arcade features are here. Quasi is rather stiff and awkward-looking compared to the spritely fellow from the coin-op.



COMMODORE 64

■ In terms of graphics and sound this is the closest version to the coin-op, with the programmer clearly referencing the original throughout. The only thing missing is the final bell collecting screen, but then that's true of all the home versions.



DRAGON 32

■ With the whole screen greener than Quasi's tunic in the original, this certainly isn't the best looking version. The gameplay is okay, though, although it is difficult – the rope swings in particular will most likely give you the hump.



VIC-20

■ This was some achievement, squeezing the game into the VIC's standard memory. It is rather basic and features character rather than pixel movement (this does at least take the hassle out of positioning Quasi for jumps). Overall a decent job.



ORIC

■ The Oric often excelled at arcade conversions and this is another good one. The graphics and sound are fine but the game is spoilt by one flaw – you cannot control Quasi mid-jump as in most other versions, leading to many annoying deaths.





AMSTRAD CPC

■ A very early CPC game – it was created at Ocean on pre-production hardware and it shows. The graphics are chunky and Quasi's movement is rather jerky, but as the game runs at a quick pace and is undeniable playable it's hard to criticise.

ATARI 8-BIT

■ This version was developed for Ocean by Steven MacIlwee but for reasons unknown was never officially released. That's a shame as it's an agreeable effort that's only let down by iffy animation. The game is fun to play regardless.





BBC MICRO

■ A very good version for the Beeb, developed by Acorn specialists Superior Software. It's quick and colourful, although, like the Oric version, you can't control Quasi in the air. One oddity: the deadly pits are merely small troughs, as you can see!



ELECTRON

■ Similar to the BBC version, only the graphics flicker and it runs a little slower. As on the Beeb, it's possible to select the starting screen at the beginning – perfect for practising some of the trickier challenges.

MSX

■ Featuring the largest and most detailed version of Quasi, this is the best looking 8-bit version of the game. It plays really well too, and the difficulty level is just right. The only downside is the audio – there's no music at all.





MICRO MACHINES 2 101

■ *Micro Machines 2* continued the original's unique brand of nutty, top-down racing across toilet seats, breakfast tables and suchlike while adding new vehicles and fresh characters. It also made use of Codemasters' J-Cart on the Mega Drive which allowed up to eight players to compete on a selection of tracks.

IN THE KNOW

» **PUBLISHER:** Codemasters

» **DEVELOPER:** Supersonic Software

» **RELEASED:** 1994

» **GENRE:** Racing

» **PLATFORM:** Various

They were tiny and 'toony but that didn't stop Micro Machines racing once again into gamers' hearts. David Crookes parks up with the developers of what became a double sequel

When racing fans first saw *Micro Machines* on the NES, they could easily have let out a snort of derision. It would have been understandable. In an era where graphics mattered and realism was sought, a gimmicky affair with tiny vehicles that eschewed proper tracks for races around pool tables and breakfast bars sort of jarred against the likes of *Rad Racer,* which aimed for realism.

Yet designer and coder Andrew Graham pulled a blinder with that 1991 release. For *Micro Machines* was simple in both concept and play, combining innovation with action. There was a wide variety of vehicles and a good number of fun backgrounds. But most of all, it had excellent multiplayer options, making for an incredible point-scoring, hair-tearing, shouty race for space.

As such, it didn't take a genius to realise a sequel to one of gaming's greatest ever racers would have to cross the finishing line at some point. The only problem was that Andrew had returned to university at a time when the Mega Drive was doing so well. Something that struck at the heart of David Darling, who remembers, "We couldn't wait for him to come back."

The solution lay across town from Codemasters' Leamington Spa HQ where group of four developers had been working above a shoe shop for a company called Supersonic Software. Producing games such as *Monte Carlo Casino, Moto X Simulator* and *Cosmic Spacehead,* it was headed by Peter Williamson who had worked for Codemasters on *Super Stuntman* and *Super G-Man* in 1987. "He'd made lots of games that we'd published over the years and he'd built up this small studio," says David. "So we got him to do *Micro Machines 2: Turbo Tournament*."

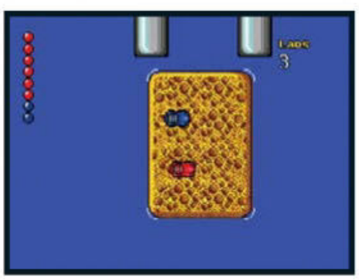
It was an opportunity Peter could not resist. "*Micro Machines* had been a great success, primarily on the NES, and Codemasters was switching its focus to the Mega Drive," he says. "A sequel seemed like a obvious thing to do and because I'd just finished *Cosmic Spacehead,* I was ready to start something new. I'd been a big fan of *Micro Machines* and I pushed for the job of developing the sequel."

The idea for the sequel was to replicate the feel of the first game while throwing everything but the kitchen sink at it in terms of features. Supersonic therefore used Andrew's first game as a reference so most of the vehicles had just left, right, accelerate and brake controls, but the code and the graphics were produced entirely from scratch.

It was to be Supersonic's reimagining of the game with involvement from Codemasters, too. It included a tortuous single-player challenge mode that rewarded the top two finishers with qualification to the next round and a head-to-head in which players had to pull away a screen's length in a bid to wipe away their opponent's lives. But multiplayer was, again, the main draw.

"We took lots of the ideas and elements from *Micro Machines* and we tried hard to capture, and hopefully go beyond, what made Andrew's original such a great game," Peter explains. "There was definitely an expectation that the game would do well."

For David, it was important the game did not appear to be a lazy continuation of the debut. "We were trying to make it similar but different," says David. "We'd done things like the breakfast table and the kitchen table and things like that and so we began thinking what about in the attic or the garden and all of these different things. We loved the first ▶



» [Mega Drive] The sponge section was a particular favourite of Peter Williamson, as it is with the **RG** team.



» [Mega Drive] The idea was not to remain neck-and-neck, but to put some distance between you and the opposition.

Choose Your Racer

Every one has a favourite character they picked. Who was yours?







» [Mega Drive] While locations from the previous game returned, they were completely redesigned.

Mastering The Vehicles

A look at each type of vehicle and how they handle



CONVERTIBLES

■ Nippy and quick, it isn't particularly easy to keep the Convertibles on the marked out tracks as the vehicles slip and skid around the bends.



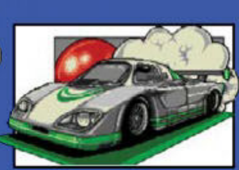
FOUR BY FOURS

■ The Jeeps have a better centre of gravity which makes turning less troublesome but they are still able to reach some high speeds.



SUPERCARS

■ Instant acceleration and loose handling makes the Supercar a fun vehicle to drive. They are also good at braking too, thankfully.



SPORTSCARS

■ Probably the easiest of all of the cars to drive, the Sportscar builds up speed but it can be easily turned around the tightest of bends.



DUMPER TRUCKS

■ Represented by a bulky, wide sprite, the Dumpster Truck takes a short while to build up acceleration and it can feel a little sluggish on the turn.



RALLY CARS

■ Similar to the Convertibles in that they are quick to accelerate, it takes a lot of braking to get around the corners with a Rally Car.



BUGS

■ The tiny Bugs – aka Volkswagen Beetles – move slower around the tracks than their souped-up rival vehicles but need care on the turns.



MONSTER TRUCKS

■ Monster Trucks feel rather heavy almost as if they are driving over a harsh, resistive surface. They also labour on the various bends.



CHOPPERS

■ As well as moving left and right, you can also press up and down to send the Chopper higher or lower. This gets them over or under obstacles.



FORMULA 1S

■ With beautiful handling and an instant feeling of speed upon acceleration, the Formula 1 vehicles help to keep you in the race.



HOVERCRAFTS

■ These crafts give the player a sensation of gliding across the water-based tracks with the vehicles smoothly accelerating and occasionally bobbing.



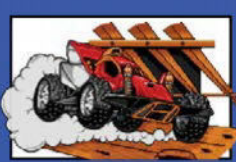
DRAGSTERS

■ These have a feeling of pulling back during their high acceleration, they also turn very wildly and often leave the track.



BEACH BUGGIES

■ Shaking as they bump along the sand, the Beach Buggies skid and veer whenever you tap left or right making them hard to keep on the track.



OFF ROADERS

■ Their ability to ride over screws as if they are just not there makes the Off Roaders versatile and fast little vehicles to be in possession of.



POWER BOATS

■ If you are not accelerating, then the water's waves will ensure you float backwards but this can be used to your tactical advantage.



ATVS

■ With a short turning angle and a less speedy pace, handling a slightly vibrating ATV feels well within the grasp of a *Micro Machines 2* novice.

▶ game and there were boundaries that we had to stick to but at the same time we wanted to stretch our creativity."

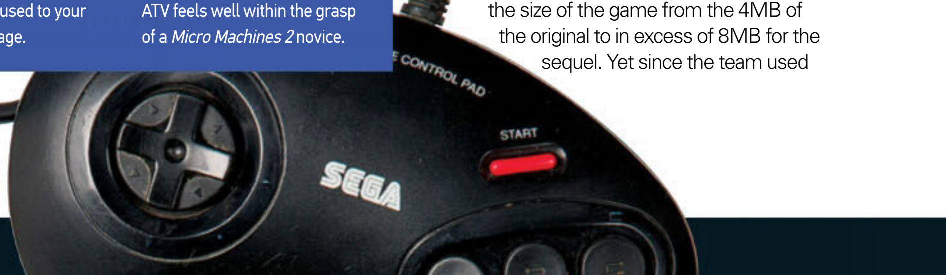
By the time production started on the sequel, it was 1993 and the original game had just been successfully ported – straight from the NES – to the Mega Drive by Charlie Skilbeck and Neil Hill. A sequel release date of November 1994 was pencilled in – "There was a bit of pressure to hit that deadline," says Peter. "I'm sure we had some meetings but I can't really remember them," he says. "I think we just dived in and got going."

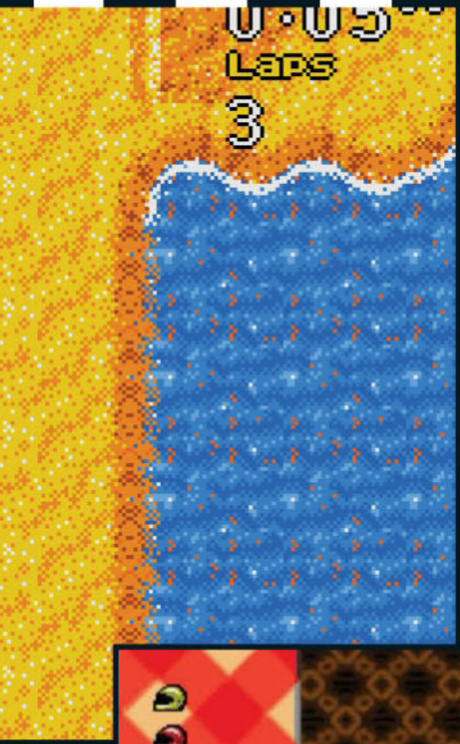
One of the first decisions was to work on the physics of the vehicles. Differing physics had already been a feature of the first game which introduced unique handling of the tanks and boats. But in order to make the expanded range feel like more than a simple change of graphics, more variables were incorporated so that heavier vehicles felt sluggish, for example.

"We wanted to add variety and depth, where different cars and tracks were a slightly different experience," says Peter. "The physics were programmed with various input variables, such as power, air friction, tyre friction and wheel lock. Tweaking these made the cars behave differently. After that it was just a case of play and tweak, then repeat endlessly."

The vehicles were fixed to one of 16 locations, each of which were broken down into what amounted to 53 courses. They also included hovercrafts and helicopters ("I don't think these were the strongest vehicles, but they did add something," says Peter).

Such additions effectively doubled the size of the game from the 4MB of the original to in excess of 8MB for the sequel. Yet since the team used





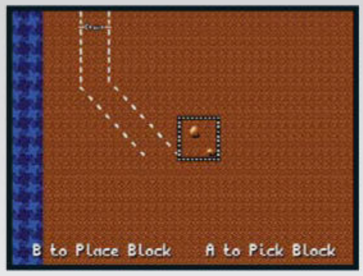
» [Mega Drive] The Construction Kit made its debut with the PC version but it was included in a Mega Drive release.



» [Mega Drive] There were lots of pieces from which to choose including a host of hazards.



» [Mega Drive] Laying down pieces was as easy as pressing B on the pad, then selecting A to choose another.



"The game was good at making players interact verbally with each other and lots of fun ensued"
Peter Williamson



» [PC] Following on from the first game, the developers used their imagination to stage races across some peculiar objects.

compression techniques, they avoided the need for costly high-capacity carts and that allowed for the use of a greater head-turning innovation: the Joypad Cartridge or, more commonly, the J-Cart.

Comprising a special ROM cartridge with two additional gamepad ports, the J-Cart allowed for four-player simultaneous racing. "Much of the fun of the first *Micro Machines* came from the social aspect of it – two players in the same room battling it out," says Peter. "The game was good at making players interact verbally with each other and lots of fun ensued. Expanding this from two to four people just made for even more fun. It was a genuine 'party' game way before that term even existed, I think, and J-Cart was massive in this respect."

It had been the brainchild of David and his brother Richard and it had already been used for *Pete Sampras Tennis*. "*BMX Simulator* was the first four-player game on the C64 that we knew of," David says. "It let two people play on the keyboard and two on joysticks. We remembered what that had brought to *BMX*, so when we did *MM 2*, we pondered how we could have more players, the J-Cart was the solution."

Indeed, the J-Cart allowed *Micro Machines 2* players to enjoy a full eight-player game. "I'm the kind of person who is never happy," says David. "So I said why not share the controller and have eight players. It was a bit difficult from a software point of view because the cars got so tiny but it was really fun."

By allowing two players to share the controller – an innovation tested in the Game Gear version of the original game and which was extended to the SNES version of *Micro Machines 2* – it ushered in an era of larger-scale communal gaming. Not that Peter was convinced. "I think the eight-player mode was a nice gimmick but it was just that," he says. "It's hard to get eight players together, all focussed on playing a game – particularly as they had to have four controllers."

Still, it got people talking and showed ambition, putting more distance between the sequel and the original. What's more, it didn't even cost that much to achieve. "We were making our own Sega cartridges and we had a really good production manager who was in charge of the factory," explains David. "He made a prototype which didn't add too much to the cost so we thought it was worth doing. It wasn't that hard either. You could buy the joystick ports and you needed to modify the circuit board. We had bought a robot which you could program to position components which made it easier."

With the mechanics in place, a lot of Supersonic's focus and time was spent on enhancing the graphics and working on the modes that allowed for smaller vehicles. The switch to the Mega Drive as the lead platform had raised the bar which meant the team could not replicate the 8-bit look. Despite high-res graphics, David was not very happy with the initial results.

"I think it might just be me being picky but I remember getting them to redraw the graphics," he recalls. "The perspective wasn't right – if the camera was close to the car, the fisheye effect was too much. We also had a bit of slowdown. We tried to make the game 50fps with the eight-player version but it was hard."



» David Darling left Codemasters and now runs Kwalee, a mobile company.

To help perfect the graphics, Supersonic got help from Big Red Software, another company based in Leamington Spa. It was asked to produce the background graphics with the task largely falling to artist Mark Neesam. He had to work within a set of limitations – "It was mostly a maximum number of graphics tiles per graphical theme," Mark says – but he was largely left to do his thing, working on an Amiga 500 with a 20MB hard drive.

Some of the graphics were difficult to implement. "I had the original graphics to play with, which was a huge help, especially having the main background graphics, such as the sand, soil, bath bubbles and tabletops," continues Mark. "But even making a decent sand texture is harder than you think. It's very hard to come up with something that doesn't contain unwanted patterns. I seem to recall having a crack at improving a couple of them and just making them worse. The extra colours allowed me to muddy up graphics that used to be nice and crisp, so I learnt to leave well alone at times. Some benefitted from a polishing up, though, using the increased palette to clean them up and antialiasing the jaggies away where needed."

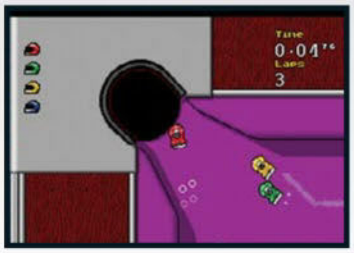
Indeed, he says the challenge was to try to create cool and interesting items that used as few graphical tiles as possible, since they were very limited. "But the Mega Drive could flip its tiles in the X and Y axes so this allowed us to create bigger objects – they just ended up being largely symmetrical in one or often both axes much of the time," Mark adds. "You'll notice the game has a lot of largely circular objects – the flowers in the garden levels, the bowls of soup and jellies on the kitchen table and so on. Also anything rectangular in shape tends be at right angles or 45 degrees for the same reason – you can flip the tiles to reuse them. So I could make things like large wine bottles, first aid kits, and pieces of corn on the cob that used relatively few tiles."

Whilst this scrimping was largely necessary, occasionally Mark would do it to free up space for pet projects. "The chainsaw with 'The Beast' written on it on the workbench, the portion of nouvelle cuisine food on a plate in the dinner table level and so on...," he says. It was the kind of thing David and his brother, Richard, liked to see. "Richard played a big part," says Peter. "He had a eye for detail and he really encouraged us to endlessly tweak things, something that was essential to getting the gameplay just right." As such, the game began to grow its own personality.

Not that *Micro Machines* wasn't afraid to borrow some personality from others. Journalists including Violet Berlin, ▶



» [Mega Drive] There were options for four players and Party Play allowed 16 people in total.


» [Mega Drive] The pool table of the original game returns, but with a brand new baize to race on.



» [Mega Drive] As well as cars, *Micro Machines 2* put you in control of other vehicles, including these ATVs.



» [PC] Some of the scenery was interactive such as these drills which would hinder players.



DEVELOPER HIGHLIGHTS

MICRO MACHINES MILITARY
SYSTEM: Mega Drive
YEAR: 1996

ANTZ EXTREME RACING
SYSTEM: Various
YEAR: 2002

EMERGENCY MAYHEM (PICTURED)
SYSTEM: Wii
YEAR: 2008



"We kept asking for improvements and working and working on it until it was like the original"
David Darling

▶ the co-presenter of the Children's ITV videogame programme *Bad Influence!*, enjoyed a cameo in the game. "Richard Eddy, the PR guy for Codemasters, was friendly with the journalists and they visited often to see the game as it progressed. Violet Berlin came to look at it and he asked her if he could take her picture and put it in the game."

The interactivity did not stop there, though, and nor did it cease with the ability to change the names of the various characters either. *Micro Machines 2* allowed for greater interaction with the backgrounds. "There were levels mostly in the dark and holes in the wood in the attic which you could fall through," says Darling. "Little features like that were great and Peter and his team added lots of innovation."

Flippers in the pinball level could knock cars off-course, traffic lights could change in Crossing Chaos and send vehicles hurtling across your path, and drills would narrow the track and cause a nasty accident if they caught the metalwork. The forest had weak areas that, once driven over, would leave holes, changing the dynamics of the course.

"In terms of track features, I think the sponge in the kitchen was the best new addition," Peter says, referring to a section of the course which made players time their vehicle's entry on to a slow-moving sponge and figure the best time to zoom off it again. "Pausing the race and effectively adding a short 'arena' section was a real plus I think."

Peter also points out a simple track called Banked Oval which had just two bends to negotiate. "As the cars were fast, timing of these was key," Peter adds. "That simple design, which again took endless tweaking, really worked. The toilet seat track which took four seconds a lap was great too."

There were some issues to iron out, though. David confesses that he didn't like the physics of the sequel initially, saying he loved the way the first game had achieved the skids, avoiding the feel of manoeuvring a train around a track. It wasn't being satisfactorily replicated in the sequel initially, he explains.

"If you don't have it, then you're not racing, you're just navigating," says David. "You want it so that cornering is different depending on the line you take and you need a loss of speed as you turn. We kept asking for improvements and working on it until it was like the original." In the end, it worked perfectly.

As before, the game was widely ported, with versions released on DOS, Game Gear, SNES and Game Boy. In 1996 – following more than 250,000 sales for *Micro Machines* – an update for the Mega Drive was released called *Micro Machines Turbo Tournament '96*. It updated tracks and added eight new ones including a barbecue, gym, camp site and a lab, making 65 in total. The game also had a new soundtrack. But it was only available in the PAL region.

"I guess the release territories was a function of Codemasters' commercial reach back then," explains Peter. "The US was a very tough market to compete


» [PC] Each of the track themes had nice touches, such as makeshift bridges to raise the levels of peril.

in and Codies back then was a relatively small UK-based company," he adds. "*MM'96* was clearly inspired by the success of *Micro Machines 2* which had got to number four in the UK charts the previous Christmas. That was a big deal. The game was commercially very successful, so there was always going to be a sequel. We effectively only had maybe six months to produce the sequel though, so *MM'96* was kind of a remix of *MM2* with some additional features."

The new version included a construction kit that had been included in the DOS game which enabled gamers to design their own layouts, picking vehicles and backgrounds. "We had got into user-generated content even in those days," says David. "It was a continuation of what we'd been doing with the Game Genie, our cheat system. When we released that, we had a book with all of the codes in but then people began to find their own codes and putting them in magazines."

Peter was impressed by this addition. "That was probably *MM'96*'s biggest new feature," he says. "Track design was a really key factor in what made a good *Micro Machines* experience and as developers we spent ages tweaking tracks to be just right. It seemed like a cool idea to allow users of the game some of this control. The system was fairly basic, but it worked and there were some really nice tracks produced."

There were lots of track pieces and themes from which to choose and they could be saved to the NVR memory chip of the J-Cart. The game was such a success – "We got 100 per cent in *GamesMaster*," Peter says – that Supersonic was asked to develop *Micro Machines Military*. Andrew Graham returned for *Micro Machines V3*, though.

Today, the *Micro Machines* legacy continues. At the end of 2014, Codemasters created the similar title *Toybox Turbos*. "It's been a good journey for Codemasters," says David. But there's still mileage left… *

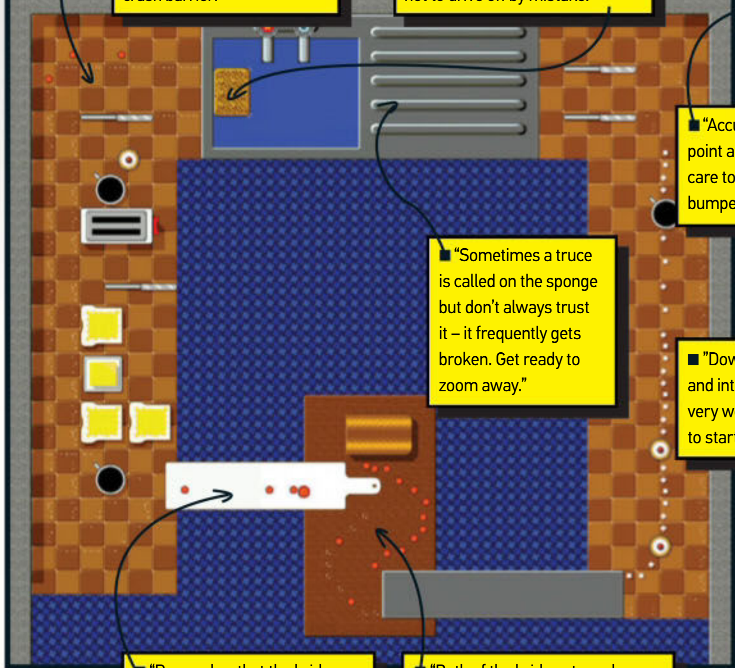


» [Mega Drive] Lots of household objects were scattered throughout the various tracks.

Track Master

Peter Williamson gives us his winning strategies on three key courses

FERRY FIASCO



■ "Sometimes it's best to be last on to the sponge – you can come speeding onto it and use your opponent as a crash barrier!"

■ "Once you and your opponents are on the sponge, it gets tense. You have to keep moving to avoid aggressive players but be careful not to drive off by mistake."

■ "Sometimes a truce is called on the sponge but don't always trust it – it frequently gets broken. Get ready to zoom away."

■ "Remember that the bridges are also both quite narrow so care is needed if you're to make it safely over them."

■ "Both of the bridges to and from the island are approached by twisting turns, so be in control around the approaches."

PINBALL PANIC



■ "Time your first turn at the top of the straight well. It's important to be positioned properly for the twists ahead."

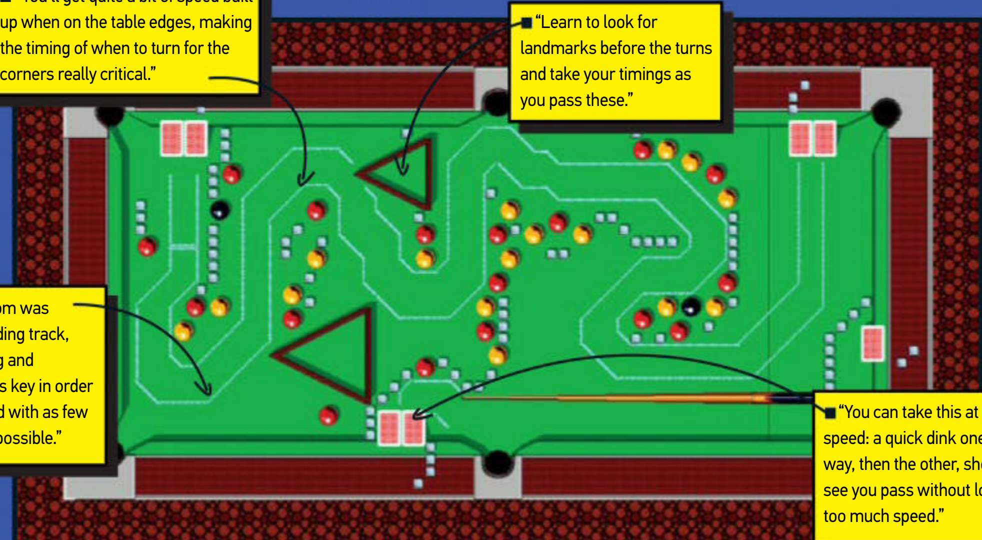
■ "Accuracy is key at this point and you have to take care to avoid all of the bumpers at all costs."

■ "Down past the flippers and into the table – time this very well and then get ready to start it all again."

■ "Accuracy isn't so important here because there are few obstacles. Don't try to cheat by cutting the corner though – you'll blow up."

■ "Prepare for launch! You'll come shooting out of here at great speed so make sure you're ready."

POOL SLALOM

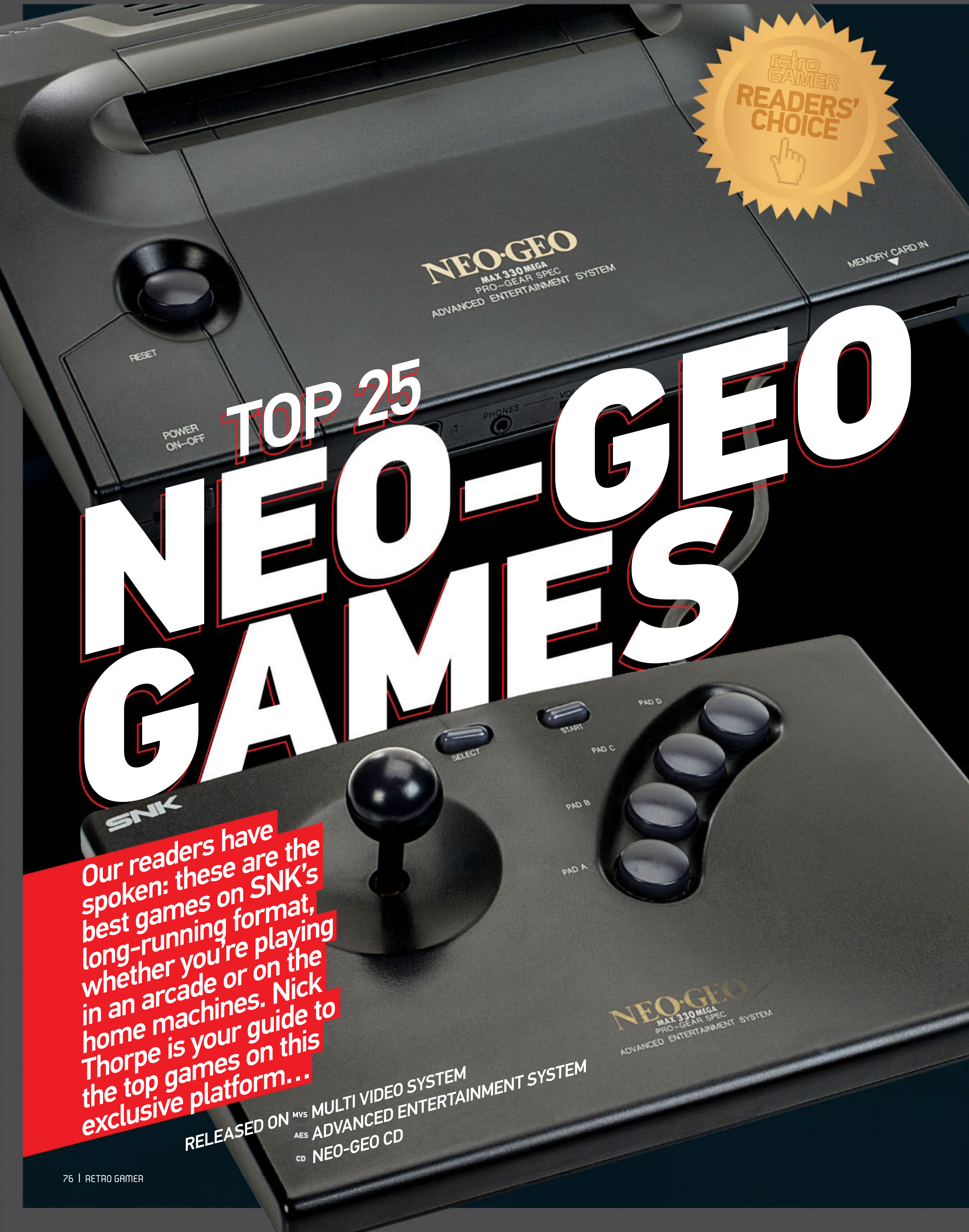


■ "You'll get quite a bit of speed built up when on the table edges, making the timing of when to turn for the corners really critical."

■ "Learn to look for landmarks before the turns and take your timings as you pass these."

■ "Pool Slalom was another winding track, where timing and accuracy was key in order to get around with as few mishaps as possible."

■ "You can take this at speed: a quick dink one way, then the other, should see you pass without losing too much speed."

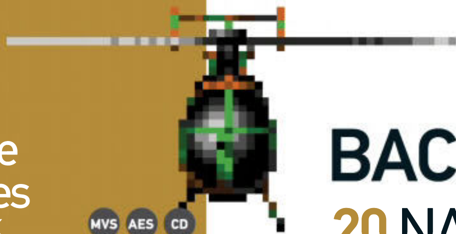


retro GAMER READERS' CHOICE

TOP 25 NEO-GEO GAMES

Our readers have spoken: these are the best games on SNK's long-running format, whether you're playing in an arcade or on the home machines. Nick Thorpe is your guide to the top games on this exclusive platform…

RELEASED ON
MVS MULTI VIDEO SYSTEM
AES ADVANCED ENTERTAINMENT SYSTEM
CD NEO-GEO CD



25 Twinkle Star Sprites

■ Developer: ADK MVS AES CD
■ Genre: Shoot-'em-up ■ Year: 1996



This cutesy game is one of the very few competitive shoot-'em-ups ever made. Your goal is to combo enemy kills, thus sending fireballs over to your opponent – but these can be deflected back, summoning deadly bosses!

24 Fatal Fury

■ Developer: SNK MVS AES CD
■ Genre: Fighting ■ Year: 1991



Street Fighter designer Takashi Nishiyama's second one-on-one fighter not only launched a rivalry with Capcom, but introduced iconic characters such as Terry Bogard and Geese Howard to players across the world.

23 Art Of Fighting 2

■ Developer: SNK MVS AES CD
■ Genre: Fighting ■ Year: 1994



This sequel saw the Sakazaki family reunited and determined to take down the rising crime lord Geese Howard. Like the original *Art Of Fighting*, it features huge sprites, heavy use of scaling and limited-use special moves.

22 Shock Troopers: 2nd Squad

■ Developer: Saurus MVS AES
■ Genre: Run-and-gun ■ Year: 1999



With no team-up mode and more cartoonish graphics, this sequel stands boldly apart from its predecessor – but it's an excellent run-and-gun in its own right, with strong stage design and excellent ride-on vehicles.

21 Last Resort

■ Developer: SNK MVS AES CD
■ Genre: Shoot-'em-up ■ Year: 1992



With an eight-way pod orbiting your ship and an awesome soundtrack in the background, *Last Resort* could make you feel invincible – but then the punishing difficulty kicks in. It's an awesome game, and a real challenge.

BACK TO THE **WARZONE**

20 NAM-1975

■ **Developer:** SNK ■ **Genre:** Shoot-'em-up ■ **Year:** 1990 MVS AES CD

The whole concept of an arcade board with interchangeable cartridges wouldn't have taken off if SNK couldn't get the boards into cabinets in the first place. Thankfully, the software support was up to the task of selling the hardware, and there's no better example of that than *NAM-1975*.

This *Cabal*-style shoot-'em-up was the very first Neo-Geo game, and it immediately demonstrated the power of the hardware with some huge enemies, scaling sprites and a pace that just didn't let up. Your reflexes will need to be on point in order to survive your return to the warzone, as a single bullet is enough to cost you a life. Thankfully, a deft tap of the C button can let you roll right through enemy fire and escape to safety.



I've never beat it but I love playing those first few levels over and over because it's really f**king hard
DOWN BY LAW

WHY **RUGAL** IS THE **ULTIMATE BOSS**

19 The King Of Fighters '02

■ **Developer:** Eolith ■ **Genre:** Fighting ■ **Year:** 2002 MVS AES

It's fitting that the newest game on your list is one from the series which is arguably the Neo-Geo's longest-lasting mark on the games industry. The 2002 entry in the *King Of Fighters* series was the second 'Dream Match', combining characters from across the story into one gigantic roster. After a few years of experimenting with four-character teams, the series reverted to its classic three-on-three battles, a change which was largely welcomed – as was the return of *King Of Fighters*' iconic villain, Rugal. Meanwhile, Eolith improved hugely to ensure an audiovisual return to form for the series after the poorly-received 2001 instalment.

■ He combines the moves of iconic *Fatal Fury* bosses Geese Howard and Wolfgang Krauser, giving him a formidable foundation.

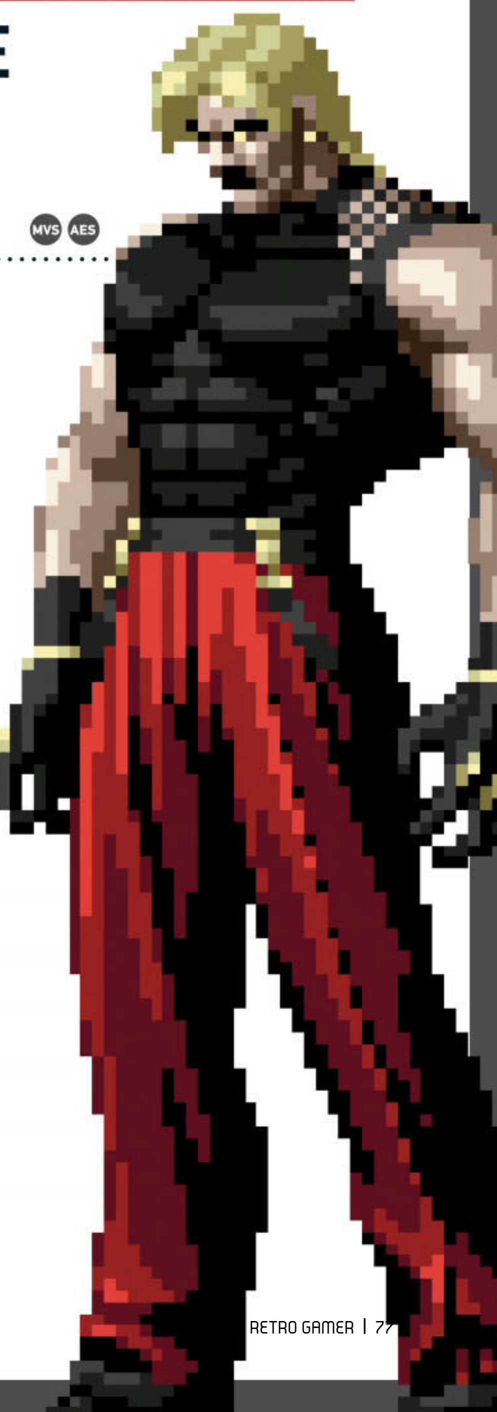
■ Do you feel like jumping in? His own signature technique, the Genocide Cutter, is a devastating anti-air attack that hits the opponent multiple times.

■ Are you content to sit back and throw fireballs at your opponent? Rugal's Dark Barrier move can reflect your projectiles, turning your own attacks against you in a deadly fashion.

■ If you've got a few hits in and feel like blocking your way to a time out victory, Rugal's dashing God Press throw will quite efficiently ruin your day.

■ Having been granted the Orochi power just wasn't enough – after his apparent death in *KOF '94*, Rugal comes back stronger with cybernetic implants.

■ When he defeats an opponent, he dips them into liquid metal to create a commemorative statue! Quite a few of these statues might seem familiar to *Street Fighter* fans…











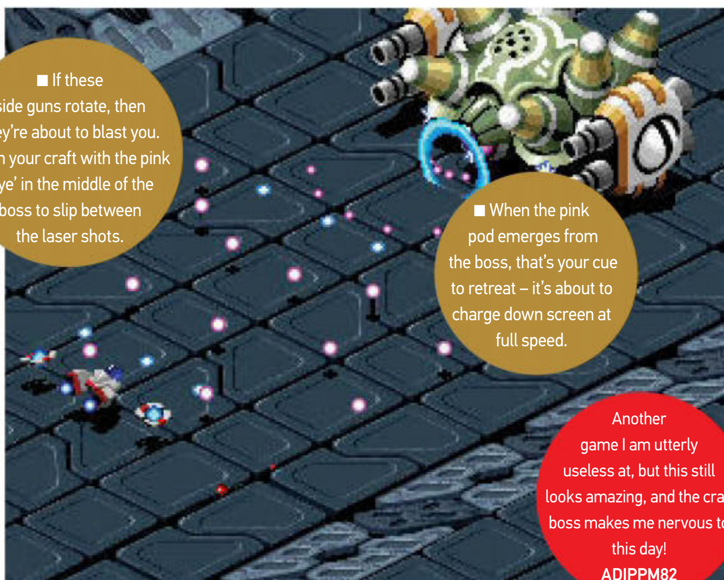
A quirky choice, but *Top Hunter*'s a bright and breezy platform shooter that deserves your attention
TREBLE

ARMED AND DANGEROUS

18 Top Hunter: Roddy & Cathy

■ **Developer:** SNK ■ **Genre:** Beat-'em-up ■ **Year:** 1994 MVS AES CD

The Neo-Geo has a reputation for amazing 2D artwork, but *Top Hunter* looks superb even by the system's high standards. It's also a lot of fun to play, thanks to the stretchy-armed punching that our protagonists Roddy and Cathy can utilise – as well as bashing their foes, they can grab them and chuck them around. In fact, bosses often need to be pulled apart piece by piece. It's also great for Neo-Geo newbies – arcade design trends make many of the system's games quite hard, but this is a easy and accessible entry point into the format.



■ If these side guns rotate, then they're about to blast you. Align your craft with the pink 'eye' in the middle of the boss to slip between the laser shots.

■ When the pink pod emerges from the boss, that's your cue to retreat – it's about to charge down screen at full speed.

Another game I am utterly useless at, but this still looks amazing, and the crab boss makes me nervous to this day!
ADIPPM82

THE HARDEST BOSS EVER?

16 Viewpoint

■ **Developer:** Aicom ■ **Genre:** Shoot-'em-up ■ **Year:** 1992 MVS AES CD

This isometric blaster looked incredible thanks to its pre-rendered 3D visuals, and sounded just as good. It also played very well, but you'd struggle to learn that thanks to the game's crushing difficulty – most players will do well just to see the second stage, never mind actually finishing the game.

■ After an unsuccessful charge, the boss will fire a spread of small bullets your way. You'll have to weave between them as the boss tracks your position.

WHY METAL SLUG X IS GREATER THAN METAL SLUG 2

17 Metal Slug X

■ **Developer:** SNK ■ **Genre:** Run-and-gun ■ **Year:** 1999 MVS AES



■ An improved engine solved many of *Metal Slug 2*'s slowdown problems, allowing for way more carnage to take place before the system began to struggle.

■ SNK made the game harder by increasing the enemy count, giving players a lot more bad guys to slaughter.

■ All of the old weaponry is available in powered-up form, allowing players to deal even more damage to the opposing forces.

A RALLY GOOD RACER

15 Neo Drift Out

■ **Developer:** Visco ■ **Genre:** Racing ■ **Year:** 1996 MVS CD

By the time *Neo Drift Out* arrived in 1996, arcade racing games had largely moved into the 3D realm – the likes of *Ridge Racer*, *Daytona USA* and *Sega Rally* had seen to that. However, there was still a place for a lower-budget take on the racing genre and *Neo Drift Out* filled that role perfectly thanks to its speed, recognisable cars and challenging course layouts. Like other rally-based racing games, your goal is to complete point-to-point races in the quickest time possible with the assistance of a navigator.

What makes *Neo Drift Out* so challenging is its extreme sense of speed. Your car is always situated on the edge of the screen because you'll need the full width of it to react to obstacles. Despite the use of a joystick as opposed to steering wheel controls, you'll feel the weight of your car in every turn, and often your success or failure will depend just as much on skilful handling of corners as avoiding hazards – and the difference between success and failure is measured in split seconds in *Neo Drift Out*.



14 Sengoku 3

■ Developer: Noise Factory
■ Genre: Beat-'em-up ■ Year: 2001

MVS AES

Released just a few days after SNK entered bankruptcy in 2001, *Sengoku 3* improved on its predecessors by allowing you to batter your foes with special 'Ninja Arts', adding variety to the standard beat-'em-up formula. As a late release for the machine, it's also very attractive.



13 Blazing Star

■ Developer: Yumekobo
■ Genre: Shoot-'em-up ■ Year: 1998

MVS AES

This excellent successor to *Pulstar* revisits that game's pre-rendered 3D visuals and manages to cram a surprising number of offensive options into just two buttons. What's more, it's a glorious example the frequently odd translations that Neo-Geo games often received. "You fail it" indeed!



12 Puzzle Bobble 2

■ Developer: Taito
■ Genre: Puzzle ■ Year: 1995

MVS

The classic bubble-popping puzzler didn't change an awful lot in its second outing, but it managed to gain some attractiveness to players with new modes. A tournament mode simulated the two-player game, while the predefined puzzle mode increased its longevity with branching paths.



It's the slightly nicer sequel to *Puzzle Bobble*
PROTOCOL PENGUIN

THREE ROADS TO RUIN

11 Shock Troopers

■ **Developer:** Saurus ■ **Genre:** Run-and-gun ■ **Year:** 1997

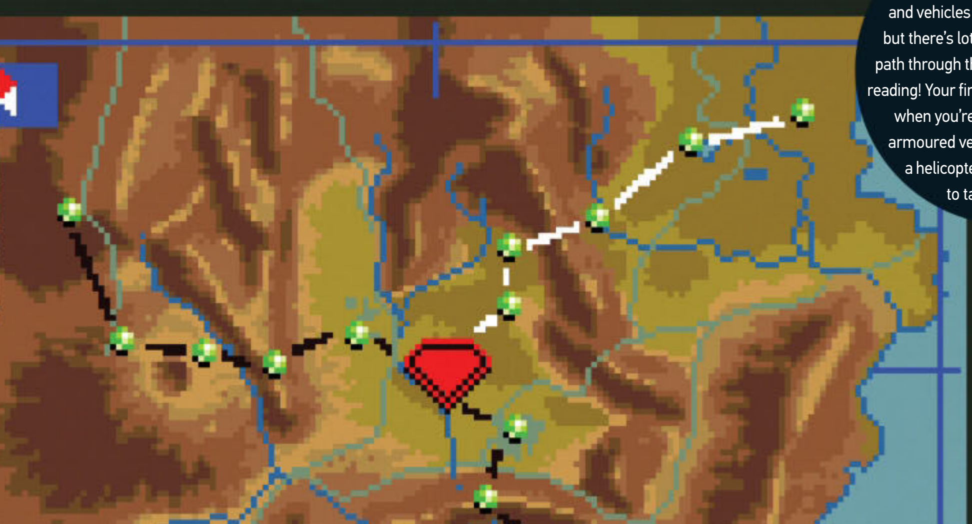
MVS

Take on the forces of evil as a lone wolf, or pick up to three characters from a roster of eight to team up in this awesome run-and-gun. It's arguably the best Nineties take on the classic *Commando/Ikari Warriors* formula, thanks to its diverse selection of characters, excellent risk/reward mechanics that encourage you to get up close and personal with the enemy, and sweet moving vehicle sections. With three distinct routes to challenge, each with unique stages and bosses, *Shock Troopers* is a game you can return to time and time again without ever having the same experience twice.



■ MOUNTAIN PATH: You'll have to make your way up a mine-strewn rocky road on this path, then do battle with a fighter jet. If you survive that, you'll have to fend off paratroopers from the back of a moving vehicle, before climbing your way to the top of a daunting cliff – fending off attacks all the way!





■ JUNGLE PATH: A variety of enemy infantry and vehicles await you in the jungle, but there's lots of opportunity to cut a path through them – they're often found reading! Your first choke point here comes when you're trapped between two armoured vehicles on a bridge, with a helicopter lying in wait, ready to take aim at you.



■ VALLEY PATH: This path starts off with players making their way across the docks, taking out lots of infantry. Just because you can't walk on the water, don't think it's safe – divers will pop out and try to harpoon you! Soon enough, you'll find yourself fighting from a moving boat.



STEALING THE SHOW

10 The Last Blade

MVS AES CD

■ **Developer:** SNK ■ **Genre:** Fighting ■ **Year:** 1997

With SNK moving *Samurai Shodown* off the veteran Neo-Geo platform to promote its new hardware ventures throughout the late-Nineties, fans desperately needed a good slice-'em-up. Thankfully *The Last Blade* arrived to fill that gap, marrying the developer's mastery of fighting mechanics with a more modern historical setting.

■ While blocking works as it always has done by holding the joystick away from your foe, parrying attacks is achieved with the use of a Deflect button.

■ Unlike *Samurai Shodown*, outside items are never thrown into the fight and thus the player's skill is the only deciding factor in a fight.

■ A Western-style classical orchestral soundtrack provides an unusual accompaniment to the on-screen action, and a counterpoint to *Samurai Shodown*'s Japanese sound.

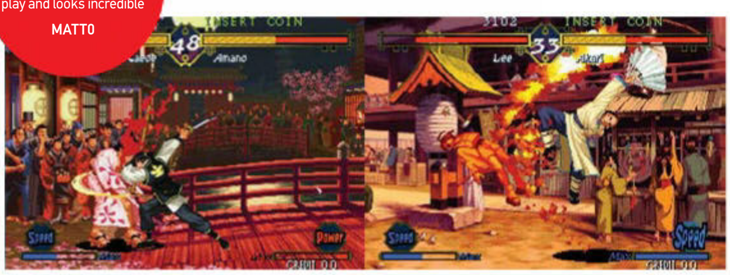
■ There are no weapon-breaking moves in *The Last Blade*, but you can crush your opponent's guard if they block too often.

■ Damage output is low, meaning that play focuses on back-and-forth strings of attack rather than landing a few well-placed powerful blows.

THE LAST BLADE 49% HEAD TO HEAD 51% THE LAST BLADE 2



A solid beat-'em-up that shines in casual level play and looks incredible
MATTO



THE CUTTING EDGE

9 The Last Blade 2

MVS AES CD

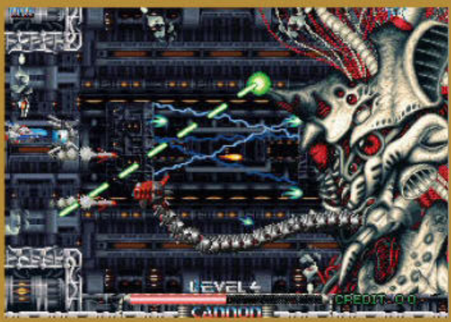
■ **Developer:** SNK ■ **Genre:** Fighting ■ **Year:** 1998

It's said that a fight "isn't going to be pretty." Well, SNK never got the memo – *The Last Blade 2* is stunning. Sprites are exquisitely drawn, while the soundtrack is amazing given the limitations of the technology. The game promotes a tranquil, serene atmosphere even as characters are sliced in twain at the hands of their victorious opponents.

Of course, it's not a game that dwells on death – to focus so heavily on the end of the fight would be to do a disservice to the struggle that precedes it, and *The Last Blade 2* refined the excellent mechanics of the first game. A new EX gauge combines aspects of the Power and Speed gauges, and each of those gauges received tweaks. Power players can perform super cancels out of special moves, while Speed players get preset combos.

However, it's the new characters that will be of most interest to players, and they're an excellent bunch: Setsuna, a stranger who is accompanied by an owl; Kojiroh, a member of the Shinsengumi who may not be all he appears to be; and Hibiki, a speedy character who uses a concealed sword. *The Last Blade 3* never happened, but the second game was so good that it didn't need to.





8 Pulstar

■ Developer: Aicom
■ Genre: Shoot-'em-up ■ Year: 1995 MVS AES CD

It's fair to say that *Pulstar* feels like an *R-Type* tribute act at times – you can see the influences of the Irem classic all over the early stages, and in the game's weapon system. But hey – if you're going to choose a game to imitate then *R-Type* is a fine one to go for, and Aicom did an excellent job of bringing the formula into the Nineties with the use of some stunning pre-rendered 3D visuals.

7 Metal Slug 3

■ Developer: SNK
■ Genre: Run-and-gun ■ Year: 2000 MVS AES CD

It's not hard to see why the third *Metal Slug* game enjoys such a good reputation amongst connoisseurs. Not only does it manage to surpass its predecessors with bigger sprites and smoother animation, it packs more variety with underwater sections, the new zombie transformation and more. It's also a challenge to seasoned *Metal Slug* veterans with bosses that can endure a hell of a lot of punishment.



6 The King Of Fighters '98

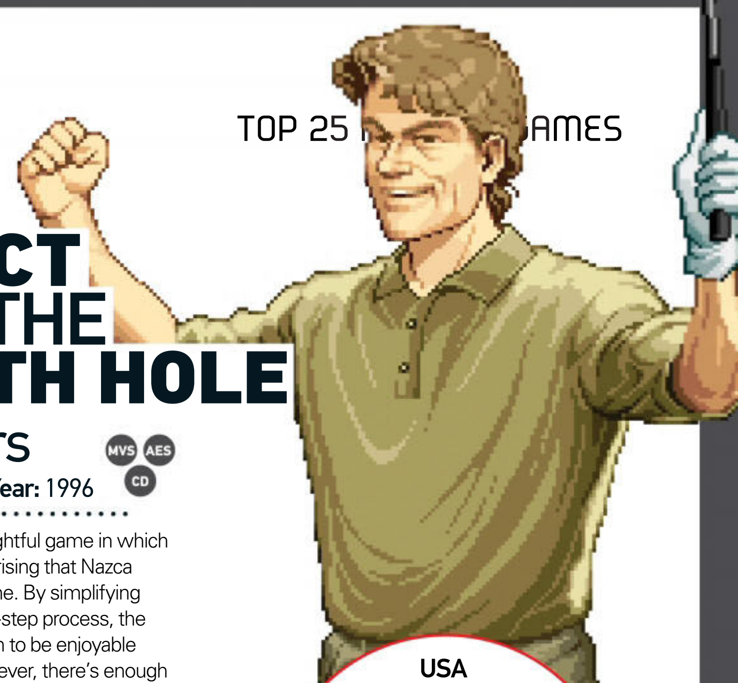
■ Developer: SNK
■ Genre: Fighting ■ Year: 1998 MVS AES CD

The first 'Dream Match' entry in the popular fighting series is your favourite of the lot, and with good reason – it combined the majority of the series' cast with the tight fighting mechanics honed over four previous games. Whether your ideal fight was between Lucky Glauber and Yashiro or Saisyu Kusanagi and Ryuji Yamazaki, you could make it happen in 1998. Plus, purists will enjoy the absence of the Striker mechanic that defined the series as it headed into the new millennium.



SERIES SHOWDOWN

KING OF FIGHTERS ...
'94 – 5%
'96 – 14%
'97 – 9%
'98 – 48%
'02 – 19%
'03 – 5%



THE PERFECT GAME FOR THE NINETEENTH HOLE

5 Neo Turf Masters

■ **Developer:** Nazca ■ **Genre:** Sports ■ **Year:** 1996 MVS AES CD

Golf is not a fast-paced sport. It's a slow, thoughtful game in which accuracy is prized – and that's why it's so surprising that Nazca was able to turn it into an excellent arcade game. By simplifying the process of taking a shot into an easy three-step process, the developers made the game accessible enough to be enjoyable even to those who don't enjoy the sport. However, there's enough challenge in its four courses that even hardened golf fans should be able to have a good time with *Neo Turf Masters* – and that wide appeal is the mark of an excellent game.



USA COURSE, HOLE 14

■ This hole is bound to trip you up thanks to its hazards at the end of the fairway. If you're playing a character with a powerful drive, try to position the ball at the end of the fairway. If you're not, take the safe route and stop short of the bunkers on your initial drive – it's worth it in the long run.

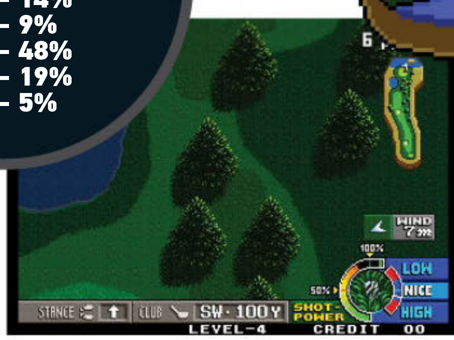
AUSTRALIA COURSE, HOLE 5

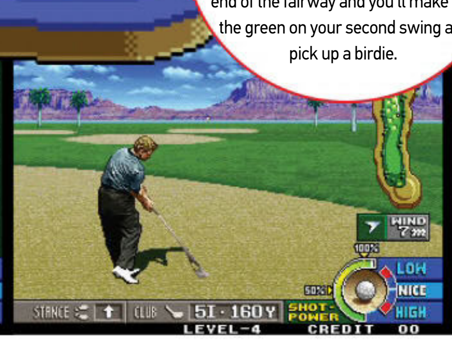
■ This will give you nightmares if you struggle to maximise your drives, thanks to a huge water hazard. Practice hitting the sweet spot past max power, and remember to pay attention to the wind conditions to ensure you don't stray out of bounds.

Lots of fond memories of playing this with my friends using the beer-stickied trackball in my local pub as a youth
NATHAN WIND

JAPAN COURSE, HOLE 6

■ This is a good example of paying attention to the par value. It's tempting to smack the ball away, but if you end up in the rough you're going to regret it, due to the clump of trees before the green. Drive to the end of the fairway and you'll make it to the green on your second swing and pick up a birdie.







MASTER THE FLYING POWER DISC!

4 Windjammers

■ **Developer:** Data East ■ **Genre:** Sports ■ **Year:** 1994 MVS AES CD

■ If you rotate the stick as you're throwing the disc, you'll produce a curved shot to leave opponents wrong-footed.

■ The quicker you can position yourself beneath a descending disc, the more powerful your eventual throw will be.

■ Don't stand too close to your goals – a throw can knock you backwards into them, which helps your opponent.

■ If your opponent likes to hang around the edges, a toss up will leave them floundering, but will only score two points.

LIVE THE BLOODY LIFE

3 Samurai Shodown II

■ **Developer:** SNK ■ **Genre:** Fighting ■ **Year:** 1994 MVS AES CD

The original *Samurai Shodown* was well-received, but the masterful sequel took things to a whole new level. SNK improved the presentation and expanded the cast of characters as you might expect, adding popular characters such as Haohmaru's rival Genjuro Kibagami, Tam Tam's sister ,Cham Cham, and the wonderfully (albeit bizzarely) named monk, Nicotine Caffeine.

However, *Samurai Shodown II* is mostly notable for being revolutionary in a mechanical sense – the game included advanced movements such as rolling, quick defensive hops, weapon-breaking moves and the parry mechanic, a proactive blocking technique which opened opponents up to a counter-attack. These inclusions had a huge impact on the fighting genre for years to come, both in SNK's own games and those developed by its rivals.



The perfect sequel and arguably the game that caused many to jump on the SNK train (possibly from Terry Bogard's stage) GREY FOX

THE KING OF NEO-GEO FIGHTERS

2 Garou: Mark Of The Wolves

■ **Developer:** SNK ■ **Genre:** Fighting ■ **Year:** 1999 MVS AES



SNK and Capcom never could let each other get the upper hand, so when the *Street Fighter* series ditched the old cast in the beautifully animated *Street Fighter III*, *Fatal Fury* did the same in the equally fluid *Mark Of The Wolves*. Mechanically, *Garou* introduces the Just Defend, in which perfectly timed blocks actually regain health and allow for counter attacks. Additionally, you can select a certain portion of your life bar to activate the TOP system, in which your character gains added offensive power and slow health recovery. As a nuanced and attractive game, this is the ultimate Neo-Geo fighter.



COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF

1 Metal Slug

■ **Developer:** Nazca ■ **Genre:** Run-and-gun ■ **Year:** 1996

MVS AES CD

For many of us, the most memorable thing about the Neo-Geo is the premium pricing that kept it out of our hands, so it's fitting that the game that tops your list is absurdly expensive. If you want to pick up *Metal Slug* for your Neo-Geo AES you're looking at a four-figure price point, and even the vastly more affordable Neo-Geo CD version will set you back more than a brand-new game today. But there's a reason that *Metal Slug* holds those prices – as well as being the single best reason to own a Neo-Geo, it's possibly the finest run-and-gun ever crafted.

Metal Slug's development team, which was formed from ex-Irem staff,sought to create a spiritual successor to *GunForce 2*. It's a connection that can be seen in the style of the detailed boss sprites and the basic gameplay, but *Metal Slug* changed its tone with a large helping of humour. Enemy soldiers leap and sneak around, scream in terror and even dive from sinking ships. Even your tank itself, the titular Metal Slug, looks quite funny as it leaps about the screen and rocks backward in the face of a massive impact.

Like all of its successors, *Metal Slug* features tight controls and awesome music that blends rock, jazz and military themes. However, what those games don't feature is the original's focus – where later *Metal Slug* games complicated and slowed down the formula with more vehicles, comedic transformations and bizarre alien enemies, the original keeps things simple. It also has some features that tended to be left unused in later entries, such as vertically-oriented and split-level stages.

The original *Metal Slug* is also rather more forgiving than its successors, as getting and keeping a *Metal Slug* tank is a fairly regular occurrence, which means you can take more hits before death. Likewise, boss design hasn't progressed to the rather more punishing designs found in later games, and it's fairly easy to work out what most bosses do. The sequels are beloved by those who mastered the original; the original is a better entry point for the general audience.

But to merely call *Metal Slug* great in comparison to its successors is to do it a disservice. *Metal Slug* is beautiful to look at, a joy to listen to and thrilling to play through. You'll never feel cheated upon death, and that's why you will keep coming back.





SERIES SHOWDOWN

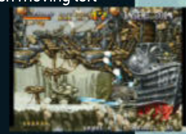
METAL SLUG – 52%
METAL SLUG 2 – 6%
METAL SLUG 3 – 26%
METAL SLUG 4 – 3%
METAL SLUG 5 – 0%
METAL SLUG X – 13%

Perfect length, difficulty curve, music, graphics, just fantastic
KERNOW

BOSS RUSH

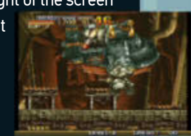
STAGE 1

■ The first boss is a big one, but it's totally immobile. Alternate between moving left and right to avoid the mortar shots, and when the large energy cannon fires you'll need to duck or jump over the shots.



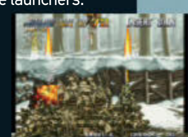
STAGE 2

■ If you're in the *Metal Slug*, this is pretty easy – you can sit at the right of the screen and shoot. If not, watch out for its three firing modes – horizontal rockets, directed rockets and bouncing bombs.



STAGE 3

■ This huge tank is a real pain, thanks to its central cannon and mine launchers. Destroy the launchers first and then just keep out of the main cannon's path. Your grenades will come in handy here.



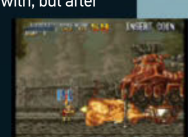
STAGE 4

■ Dual tanks? Oh no! You can swap between the upper and lower floors here, but you'll face attacks from all directions anyway. Concentrate your fire on one tank to halve the danger quickly.



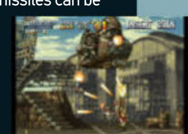
STAGE 5

■ You'll need to move left and right to dodge mortar fire to begin with, but after a few hits the boss will reveal a flamethrower! Destroy this to rescue hostages and gain access to a useful hiding space.



STAGE 6

■ If you're using a pistol against Morden's chopper, you're toast. His missiles can be avoided, but you'll need to shoot through his barrage. When the machine gun starts up, make sure you stay off the ground!





ESSENTIAL GAME

Burgertime

For sheer playability there's little in the Intellivision library to match Data East's culinary coin-op conversion. Building giant hamburger patties while dropping lettuce on rogue fried eggs and pepper-spraying deviant sausages remains a timeless distraction, somehow, and the Intellivision version is greatly superior to the Atari 2600 port. *Burgertime* was one of the first big hits on the Intellivision system, and Mattel's console later played host to a little-known sequel, *Diner*, which was not the classic that *Burgertime* was (and is), but it's definitely still well worth checking out.



Intellivision controller fact

■ The numerical keypad and disc pad shared a communication line with the CPU, so in some games you couldn't run and fire at the same time. To get around this players took to dual-wielding two controllers using the pad on one and the keypad on the other.

Intellivision Controller

» **PLATFORM:** INTELLIVISION » **RELEASED:** 1979 » **COST:** £30-40 (BOXED) £15-20 (UNBOXED)

The first dedicated videogame system to feature a 16-bit processor, Mattel's Intellivision console was also the first real threat to the dominance of Atari's all-conquering 2600. With markedly better graphics and sound, it's probably best remembered for its remarkable multi-function controller. This allowed players to move in an unprecedented sixteen directions via a circular pad, an innovation unique in the industry until the arrival of the analogue thumbstick. Additionally the controller had a 12-button keypad, with two action buttons mounted on each side, and was far more sophisticated than Atari's one-button 2600 joystick. Arguably the most fun aspect of the Intellivision controller was sliding coloured plastic overlays across the face of the keypad, revealing the button layout for each game. The only downside was that prolonged periods of play left you liable to 'Intellivision thumb' because the circular pad was not all that comfortable to use. But the likes of *Burgertime*, *Star Strike*, and making your Atari-owning friends jealous all but made up for that, of course. *

Minority Report

CLASSIC GAMES YOU'VE NEVER PLAYED





» [N64] You'll be no stranger to the odd giant leap by the time *Beetle Adventure Racing* is over.



» [N64] Gems are fuel for your cards. You can use them when they are greyed out, but it depletes your energy bar.

NINTENDO 64

The N64's technical uniqueness means that lots of its third-party games are exclusive and even the multiplatform ones can be drastically different. Join Nick Thorpe for a look at some lesser-known examples…



BEETLE ADVENTURE RACING

■ DEVELOPER: PARADIGM ENTERTAINMENT ■ YEAR: 1999

■ In any reasonable world, there's no way that *Beetle Adventure Racing* should be a good game. After all, everyone knows that licensed games were rubbish and Hitler was an awful human being – yet here we are, preparing to sing the praises of a game designed to promote one of approximately two acceptable things ever to emerge from Nazi Germany (the other being Fanta, if you were wondering). Clearly, this is no reasonable world.

Beetle Adventure Racing isn't just a good game, it's a great game and it's a real shame that more people aren't aware of it. In *Beetle Adventure Racing*, you can drive any car you like as long as it's a Volkswagen Beetle. Well, unless you're in Australia, in which case you'll be driving an HSV Commodore instead – but we digress. The real star of the game isn't the vehicle, but the tracks you drive it on. There's a wide variety of locations to visit as you'll speed around six varied tracks from frozen wastelands to dinosaur-friendly volcanic parks. However, the real reason that the game truly lives up to the 'Adventure Racing' billing is the wealth of routes on offer. Each track offers up to ten places to diverge from the circuit, with both shortcuts and lengthier routes on offer.

The main reason to go exploring is to find bonus crates, which can significantly aid you in your pursuit of a championship. Some crates give helpful nitro boosts, aiding you in the present race, but the vast majority offer points. Depending on the difficulty level, you'll need to find 50-65 points in order to earn a continue, and if you can find all 100 in a single race you'll unlock an extra arena for the multiplayer Beetle Battle mode. However, you can also use shortcuts to simply get around faster. There's still not an awful lot out there that's similar to *Beetle Adventure Racing* in this regard, and the exploration gameplay can even broaden the appeal to gamers that don't traditionally enjoy racers.

The Beetle Battle mode also carries on the collection theme, as you'll need to collect a selection of coloured ladybirds before making your way to the exit. To complicate

matters, not only does everyone else have the same idea, but you're all able to arm yourselves with rockets, bombs, screen-flipping items and all sorts of other nefarious things. It's not as deep as the main game's exploratory racing, but with the N64's four control ports it should prove to be a hit at any multiplayer party.

If you're wondering quite how a seemingly throwaway licensed game could turn out so well, the answer can be found in the development team. Paradigm Entertainment had worked on the N64 from the beginning, producing *Pilotwings 64* before beginning their racing legacy with the acclaimed *F-1 World Grand Prix*. With a heritage like that and a price point of less than £10 for a loose cartridge, it'd be a unreasonable world in which you didn't try *Beetle Adventure Racing* to see why we think so much of it.

IN DEPTH



CRATE ESCAPE

■ Finding and smashing crates is essential in *Beetle Adventure Racing* in order to obtain points. Some are roadside obstacles, but many are in hidden routes.

RAINBOW ROADSTERS

■ Though you're limited to Beetles and nothing else, cars with stats can be identified by their paint – now where are our 'Go-Faster' stripes?

TOURIST TRAP

■ There are many alternate routes to find on each course, but beware – they're not always shortcuts, and some can prove more difficult to navigate than the track itself.

HAZARD LIGHTS

■ Our colourful little cars are subject to many perils on their adventures, including open water and deadly lava flows. Makes you think more of *Mario Kart* than Volkswagen, right?

IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...







SONIC R

SATURN

■ This racing spin-off hits a lot of the same notes as *Beetle Adventure Racing*, thanks to its canny combination of platforming and racing. You'll need to finish in pole position to get anywhere, but each of its five tracks will satisfy explorers thanks to a wealth of hidden collectibles and alternate routes.

GTI CLUB

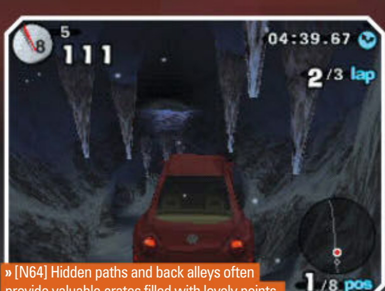
ARCADE

■ With its diminutive cars and cities that offer a multitude of possible routes, *GTI Club* is something of a spiritual predecessor to *Beetle Adventure Racing*. However, while it's great for the occasional blast of fun, being an arcade game it doesn't encourage exploration in anywhere near the same way.

DIDDY KONG RACING

NINTENDO 64

■ Although it goes about doing so very differently, *Diddy Kong Racing* is like *Beetle Adventure Racing* in that it tries to break the mould of what a racing game is. The adventure mode pits you against bosses, and you'll find yourself piloting planes and hovercrafts as well as driving an ordinary kart.



» [N64] Hidden paths and back alleys often provide valuable crates filled with lovely points.

Minority Report

OPERATION: WINBACK

■ DEVELOPER: KOEI ■ YEAR: 1999

■ Those pesky terrorists, the Crying Lions, have managed to hijack an incredibly sophisticated piece of weaponry, a orbital laser. The Special Covert Action Team is called in to fix the whole botch, but their helicopter gets shot down on the way into the complex housing the weapon's controls. Now it's up to our protagonist Jean-Luc Cougar to rescue his captured comrades, stop the Crying Lions and restore safety to the world.

Back in 1999, you'd have been hard-pressed to find a magazine that wasn't calling *Operation: Winback* 'the N64's *Metal Gear Solid*' – but that's a label that does a disservice to the game. While Konami's classic often offered non-lethal solutions to situations, in most cases you're going to have to shoot some baddies to make it through Koei's game. Gunplay is so integral to the game that your pistol has unlimited ammo, and you also come equipped with an assault rifle and a shotgun. However, Jean-Luc is a fragile chap and is heavily outnumbered, so if you wander out into the open you'll be shot to Swiss cheese. As a result, making effective use of cover is an essential survival skill – and in this regard, it's better to think of *Operation: Winback* as a precursor to modern cover shooters like *Gears Of War*.

It's easy to see that *Operation: Winback*'s failing is the complexity of its controls. Diving behind a box and popping out to shoot a bad guy is a five-button process, whereas later games would simplify the process enormously. Still, if you can adjust to the controls, *Operation: Winback* offers some very enjoyable stages and two endings for players to see.



» [N64] Low health, Jean-Luc crouched behind cover and a baddie in the distance? Typical *Winback* scenario, that.

» [N64] "Right, so it's A to get in cover, C-Down to target, R to jump out and pull the gun and… hang on, what do I press to shoot?"

» [N64] At a distance, a shotgun blast is useless. Up close, it's lethal every time – but you rarely want to get in the enemy's face.

MORE GAMES TO PLAY



» FIGHTERS DESTINY

■ DEVELOPER: GENKI
■ YEAR: 1998

■ This one-on-one brawler doesn't pretend that all victories are equal – a cheap ring out or judge's decision will only earn one point of the seven needed to win a match, while a successful throw will earn two and a knockdown will earn three. As some hits win points on their own, a canny fighter is always able to mount a comeback. The fighters are generic and their movements stiff, but this is an interesting alternative fighter.



» MISCHIEF MAKERS

■ DEVELOPER: TREASURE
■ YEAR: 1997

■ The least famous of Treasure's N64 outings was given some shockingly low review scores upon its release, causing many players to avoid it. However, it's one of the best 2D platformers on the system – the game's signature grab-and-shake mechanic is unique, and, as expected from Treasure, it's rammed with ideas. It's short and the pre-rendered visuals are no longer in vogue, but it's worth a look if you missed it.



» DESTRUCTION DERBY 64

■ DEVELOPER: LOOKING GLASS STUDIOS
■ YEAR: 1999

■ While many players will remember *WipEout 64*, Psygnosis' PlayStation racer also found its way to the N64. It's not quite the same experience, as car damage doesn't affect your handling and the carnage never reaches the levels of *Destruction Derby 2*, but this is a worthwhile racer – particularly as it introduces the series' excellent Bomb Tag battles, or 'Pass Da Bomb' in later games.



» POKÉMON PUZZLE LEAGUE

■ DEVELOPER: NINTENDO SOFTWARE TECHNOLOGY
■ YEAR: 2002

■ Don't be put off by the game's cutesy exterior – this is an excellent update of *Panel De Pon/Tetris Attack*. As well as adding high-level AI for expert players, *Pokémon Puzzle League* adds a 3D mode in which the flat playfield is replaced with a cylindrical equivalent. The production values are also high for what might seem like a throwaway spin-off.

ROCKET: ROBOT ON WHEELS

■ DEVELOPER: SUCKER PUNCH PRODUCTIONS ■ YEAR: 1999

■ N64 owners were spoiled for choice when it came to 3D platformers, which meant that strong efforts like *Rocket: Robot On Wheels* got lost in the shuffle and received rather less attention than they might have done elsewhere. That's a shame, because this is an interesting and varied game. Dr Gavin has left Rocket in charge of Whoopie and Jojo, the mascots of his theme park Whoopie World. Unfortunately, Jojo is a jerk and knocks out Rocket, before kidnapping Whoopie and stealing the park's tickets and tokens. Needless to say, it's your job to help Rocket get them all back.

What this involves is a series of puzzle challenges, as well as a variety of mini-games and some vehicular fun. There's a keen sense of humour in play, as one of the early mini-games requires you to cheat at a game of noughts and crosses by lobbing things at your opponent. However, the distinguishing feature of the game is its physics model, which simulates a variety of real-world attributes including mass and acceleration. It's not a fast-paced game, but it's very rewarding.

Thankfully for Sucker Punch, its other games, such as *Infamous,* have gone on to achieve success, but its debut is also a hidden gem.



» [N64] These clowns aren't dangerous, but they have an irritating habit of stealing things you're carrying.

» [N64] How many other games let you climb up a self-made staircase of sheep? Not many, we reckon.

> **"There's a keen sense of humour in play, as one of the early mini-games requires you to cheat at a game of noughts and crosses"**

RETRO STINKER

»GASP!! FIGHTERS NEXTREAM

■ DEVELOPER: KONAMI ■ YEAR: 1998

■ This brawler contains a character creation mode, and that's the only interesting thing about it. It looks awful and plays as if the developers had never seen a fighting game before.



» BATTLETANX: GLOBAL ASSAULT

■ DEVELOPER: 3DO
■ YEAR: 1999

■ The original *BattleTanx* was forgettable, but 3DO delivered a much-improved sequel here. Given that tanks aren't considered to be speedy vehicles, *BattleTanx: Global Assault* is a surprisingly fast-paced shoot-'em-up. The game's missions are varied and interesting, requiring you to think strategically by seeking cover and prioritising targets as well as exercising your trigger finger.



» OGRE BATTLE 64: PERSON OF LORDLY CALIBER

■ DEVELOPER: QUEST
■ YEAR: 1999

■ This was originally an import-exclusive, but finally hit Europe via the Virtual Console in 2010. If you're a fan of SRPGs, this is one of the few options available to you on the N64. Gameplay is focused on strategic deployment and formation rather than micromanaging battles, and capturing bases is of the utmost importance.



» GLOVER

■ DEVELOPER: BLITZ GAMES
■ YEAR: 1998

■ A disembodied glove probably doesn't seem like an obvious choice for a videogame hero, and, truth be told, we were a little sceptical when we first came across *Glover.* However, the challenge of navigating a ball around the game's varied and attractive 3D environments is certainly an interesting one. What's more, the N64 is definitely the platform to play it on – there's a PlayStation version but it wasn't nearly as good.



» BODY HARVEST

■ DEVELOPER: DMA DESIGN
■ YEAR: 1998

■ Run around a 3D environment, hopping in and out of vehicles as you see fit and gunning down enemies. No, it's not *Grand Theft Auto* – it's just made by the same people. While this early effort from DMA features familiar open world mechanics, the plotline that sees you gunning down an alien army in a variety of time periods is a world away from the urban landscapes that would become the developer's signature.

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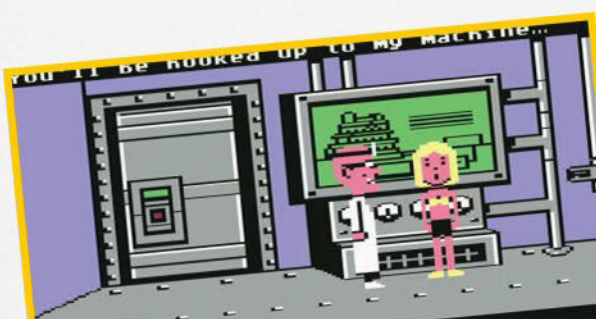
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In the chair with...

RON GILBERT

Inspired by Star Wars, Ron's love for creating interactive narratives led to a career spanning over three decades in the games industry. Mike Bevan talks past and future projects with the man behind the biggest monkey head he's ever seen

Ron Gilbert is a man who definitely needs no introduction with the retro community. Designer of the pioneering *Maniac Mansion* and creator of the iconic *Monkey Island* franchise, Ron was also the originator of the *SCUMM* adventure gaming engine that powered a whole catalogue of LucasArts adventures. After leaving LucasArts he joint-founded Humongous Entertainment, a developer specialising in adventures for children, and Cavedog, the publisher that brought us the real-time strategy title *Total Annihilation*. More recently he has been behind releases as diverse as Double Fine's *The Cave*, the humorous RPG *DeathSpank*, and the pirate-themed puzzle game *Scurvy Scallywags*. Ron's current project, *Thimbleweed Park*, is an upcoming point-and-click adventure harking back to the glory days of Lucasfilm Games/LucasArts and the mid-Eighties, via *X-Files* and David Lynch's *Twin Peaks*.



» [C64] Sandy in peril in *Maniac Mansion*.

What are your memories of being introduced to the world of computers and videogames?
There were two things that I did a lot and one was going to the arcades. At the time there were things like *Asteroids* and *Pac-Man* and that was about it. There wasn't a whole lot to play, at least where I grew up, which was a very small town. We didn't even have an arcade as such; it was a bowling alley that had about three arcade machines. My father was a physicist so he had access to a lot of the computers that the college was using and I used to go and play the original *Adventure* which was on the big mainframe computers. That was very influential. The Atari 2600 [VCS] has just come out, I didn't have one but a friend of mine did, and I would always go over and play games on that. I think those things kind of informed my tastes in videogames, and as I started to learn how to program and make games of my own it kind of felt like the most interesting thing for a 13 year old to do. I didn't want to write accounting software or anything like that, I wanted to make games! Initially it was about trying to make the games that I had already seen, I wasn't trying to design new ones, I was just copying them. There were games I would see at the arcades or games I would see on the Atari and I would reprogram and copy them. And then you start playing with differences, your own version of the game versus what you had seen…

So what machine did you start programming on?
Well the very first thing was a programmable calculator my Dad had brought home. It was very simple. Microcomputers had just started to show up, things like the IMSAI 8080, and the North Star and Altair machines. But these were not very consumer-friendly computers; they were designed for people that didn't mind soldering chips onto motherboards. But because the college had some, that was my first exposure to those early machines. I guess it was the summer before I got into high school that they bought four Commodore PET computers which they stored up at the college because they didn't really know what to do with them yet. My Dad found out about this and let me and my friend in all through the summer, and that's really where we learned programming on 'real' computers, on the Commodore PET using BASIC.

Your first job was with a company called Human Engineered Software, wasn't it?
That was my first real job. I had other jobs, when I was at college I'd worked at a company doing some programming in FORTRAN mapping software. They would take maps from geological surveys and produce plotted maps. But that was an after-school job. HES was the first job I had making games, although the game that I worked on never came out. The company went out of business about six months after I started. It was doing some educational software for kids and it was a game that taught about the immune system. So it was a load of little mini-games where you fought germs. I got the job because I had written a program for the Commodore 64 called Graphics BASIC which was an extension for the BASIC language that added commands for doings graphics and sound. I had written that on my own and sent it to [HES] to see if [HES] wanted to publish it, which it did. In turn they offered me a job.



So how did you go from simulating germ warfare at HES to joining Lucasfilm Games?
I'd left school to take the job at HES in California and when I got laid off I moved back to Oregon with my parents. So I was getting ready to go back to school when I got a phone call from Lucasfilm. They had got my name from somebody at HES because they were looking for a Commodore 64 programmer, and I'd been doing C64 work there so they had recommended me. And they asked me in for an interview. So I was obviously thrilled.

It was a stroke of luck getting in at Lucasfilm?
Definitely, it's not like I'd sent out loads of resumes. I was just at home having lunch one day and answered the phone. And had I not



> "I guess I'd thought that going to work at Lucasfilm we'd be doing Star Wars games which I think all of us wanted to do at some point… Ron Gilbert"

THE ASCENT OF STAN

Ron on how The Secret Of Monkey Island's Stan the used ship salesman came to be

"During the production of *Monkey Island* I bought a car. And I remember going to the car dealer and it being such a laughable experience, because really buying a car should be like buying a bar of soap. I should go in, find the bar of soap I want, go pay for it and leave. And that's what buying a car should be like. But it's not. Instead it's this game they play where they want to overcharge you for the car and you have to play all these games to get the cost down! It was ridiculous, and there was a point where I said, 'You know, I'm going home, I really don't want to do this anymore,' and I tried to leave, and the guy physically stopped me from leaving the car dealership… So that's kind of how Stan showed up, this ship salesman where you have to go through this idiotic ritual with him, like you do in real life. And I like how when he disappears and reappears again you never see how he got there…"



been home and missed that call that person may have just gone onto the next guy on his list, and I'd have never got that job and had that career.

So what do you remember of your first day at Lucasfilm Games?

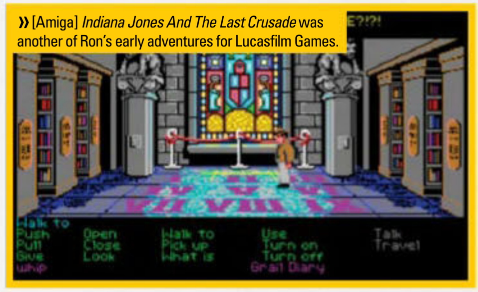
It was pretty overwhelming. There were some very smart people working there, certainly the smartest people I'd ever worked with before. And just to be at Lucasfilm was a little bit overwhelming too, seeing that it was such a foundation of my childhood. But it was very exciting and thrilling to be there, so it was overwhelming in a good way.

And Lucasfilm dropped you in the deep end, giving you the job of porting the 3D action game *Koronis Rift* to the C64…

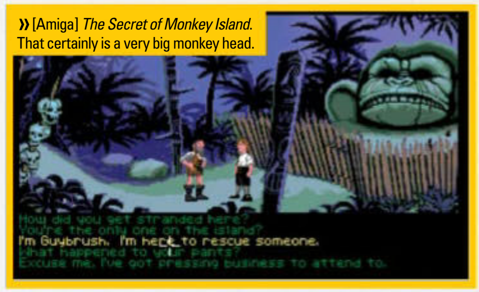
Well it was about half way through and I quickly got the game up to about the same point as the Atari version. Aric Wilmunder was doing the Atari version and he and I shared an office so we quickly got to the point of working together and getting the code locked in step by step.

And those early Lucasfilm games – *Rescue On Fractalus!*, *Ballblazer*, *Koronis Rift* and the *The Eidolon* were pushing the envelope with their 3D and fractal engines…

Yes and I didn't have an Atari computer, I was a Commodore 64 guy and I'd never heard of these games. In fact, before I worked there I didn't even know Lucasfilm made games. When Lucasfilm called it was all *Star Wars* and *Indiana Jones* to me. And those 3D games were pretty stunning. I guess I'd thought that going to work at the company we'd be doing *Star Wars* games, which I think all of us wanted to do at some point. But George [Lucas] had given the licences to other companies so we couldn't do them. But it was an odd blessing in disguise because had we been able to make *Star Wars* games, that's probably all we would have done. And as you saw what happened later at LucasArts, as it got the licences back that's all it made. Had it been that way earlier, *Maniac Mansion* and *Monkey Island* probably would never have existed…



» [Amiga] *Indiana Jones And The Last Crusade* was another of Ron's early adventures for Lucasfilm Games.



» [Amiga] *The Secret of Monkey Island*. That certainly is a very big monkey head.

How hands-on was George Lucas with the games department back at that time?

He'd come by maybe a couple of times a year, just to see what we were doing, and we'd demo the games we were working on to him. And we would have company meetings every few months and he ran those. But he was probably more involved in other parts of the company, like Industrial Light And Magic, Skywalker Sound, and the computer graphics division that became Pixar, than with the games group.

So as a *Star Wars* fan it must have been a thrill working alongside the guys that made the special-effects models for the films?

It was neat being so close to them because Industrial Light And Magic was right across the street from the building that we worked at. We would often go over at lunch and watch them blow up spaceships!

Was it a natural progression for you from working on action games to designing and producing story-driven adventures?

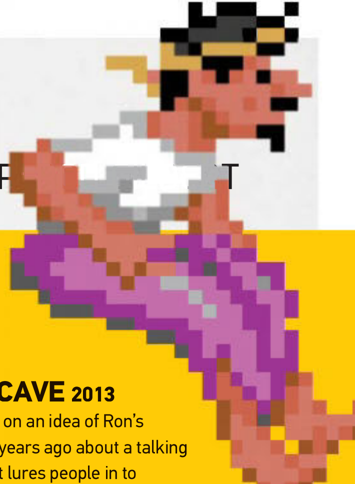
Well I don't know if you could call it natural. At that time at Lucasfilm when those early games were being made, nobody was actually saying that we needed to make adventures. We certainly all had an interest in narrative and games that told some kind of a story but it's not like we were all clamouring to make adventure games. Even *Maniac Mansion* didn't start out as an adventure. When Gary [Winnick] and I created that game we didn't even really know what it was. We had this weird story and



» Lucasfilm Games staff including (left to right) Carl Mey, Ron, David Fox and Gary Winnick.







FIVE TO PLAY

The most important games of Ron Gilbert's impressive career

MANIAC MANSION 1987

■ The first true point-and-click adventure from Lucasfilm Games (later LucasArts), *Maniac Mansion* was inspired by the sort of dumb B-movie horror films where three teenagers think it's always a good idea to split up at the first sign of anything remotely dangerous, like a big, weird and scary mansion.





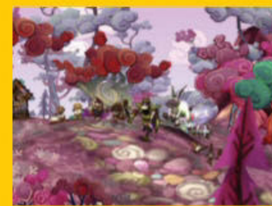
THE SECRET OF MONKEY ISLAND 1990

■ Though eclipsed by its sequel, we still adore the first *Monkey Island* if only for its brilliantly funny characters like Stan the used ship salesman, Captain Smirk, Herman Toothrot and Meathook, the guy who really, really hates it when you call him cannon-ball head…

MONKEY ISLAND 2: LECHUCK'S REVENGE 1991

■ *LeChuck's Revenge* is to *Monkey Island* what *The Empire Strikes Back* is to *Star Wars*, minus the bit about getting your hand lopped off. Arguably still the franchise's finest hour, it also has the best ending of any adventure game, like, ever.



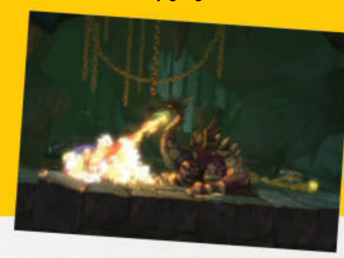


DEATHSPANK 2010

■ Dispenser Of Justice, Vanquisher Of Evil and Botherer Of Chickens, DeathSpank carves his way through this *Diablo*-esque RPG with an expansive script from Ron taking the form of a series of *Monkey Island*-style dialogue choices. The combat is simplistic but definitely moreish.

THE CAVE 2013

■ Based on an idea of Ron's from 20 years ago about a talking cave that lures people in to explore the dark sides of their personalities, this production from Tim Schafer's Double Fine has a definite air of *The Twilight Zone* mixed with a Metroidvania-style platform/puzzle adventure, and looks absolutely gorgeous.





» [PC] *Monkey Island 2: LeChuck's Revenge.* Bigger, better, and with added monkeys.

these characters, but it probably took a good six months before it worked its way around to being an adventure game.

Were you given free reign at Lucasfilm/LucasArts Games to do what you wanted in terms of game design and the like?
There were one or two exceptions. In *Maniac Mansion* I had a line where Bernard wants to run away and Dave says, 'Don't be a shit head,' and I was told that I could not swear. So we ended up with the line 'Don't be a tuna head,' which was me saying, 'Well if I can't swear I'm just going to say something stupid instead.' But, for the most part, we were given a lot of freedom to do what we wanted.

With *Maniac Mansion* being such a strange and new type of adventure, were you worried about how people reacted to it?
We didn't think about that really, I don't think we consciously looked at is as forging new territory or

> "Industrial Light and Magic was right across the street from the building that we worked at. We would often go over at lunch and watch them blow up spaceships"
> Ron Gilbert

pushing the limits of what games could do, we were just making a game. When *Maniac Mansion* came out it didn't do particularly well. The C64 was dying by that time so we decided to port it to the PC and Amiga, but even on those platforms it didn't do that well. I mean it wasn't a failure, but companies like Sierra On-Line were selling ten times as many copies as anything we were doing. So it wasn't like it was this massive hit that drove everything forward.

Although your second Lucasfilm Games adventure, *Indiana Jones And The Last Crusade* was a rather more successful venture?
Yes, that one did pretty well, and I think it was because of the licence. And, although we were basically following the script, there were things that the film glossed over that we were able to fill in with parts of the game to give the player other things to be doing than following the exact plot of the movie.

What was the design process for an adventure game, like *The Secret Of Monkey Island,* like?
I think the design for me kind of comes in two different stages. There's figuring out the initial overarching story and then there's what I call the 'backbone' puzzles – the major puzzles that really drive the narrative forward. And that's the kind of stuff that I try and figure out ahead of time when going into a project – so I know where I'm starting and I know where I'm going, but all of the details are not there yet. So during a lot of the brainstorm meetings you're filling in a lot of those holes as you're moving forward. With a game like *Maniac Mansion* or *Monkey Island* I kind of had the basic structure and then we really started making the game without knowing the details. We would start building art for the game and we were very rapidly trying to fill stuff in. It was a little bit frantic and kind of wasteful in a lot of ways. You want to be able to throw out stuff if you have a better idea or something isn't working and that becomes very difficult to do when you have invested weeks of an artist's time building a room. With *Thimbleweed Park* I'm taking a very different approach – I want to

In the chair with...



»Ron's cancelled *Good & Evil* project was inspired by *The Legend of Zelda*.



» [PC] Humongous Entertainment's adventures, like the *Freddi Fish* series, had very high production values and animated characters.

> "I think Curse was a good game and when I look at it I am very proud…"
> Ron Gilbert

have everything figured out before we start building the art because art is expensive!

So you went from pastiching old B-movie horror films in *Maniac Mansion* to old pirate movies and the Pirates Of The Caribbean Disneyland ride?!
The pirate theme really came about because I was looking at Sierra On-Line and how many copies of *King's Quest* it'd sold! It was certainly a lot more copies than anything we had at LucasArts, and I thought, well, people love fantasy. I wasn't really a big fantasy fan myself, but I knew from a market standpoint that there was something really engaging about that genre. The thing that occurred to me is that pirates share a lot in common with fantasy, so it felt like it was fresh and different for me to be able to explore that kind of stuff.

Did you move straight onto the sequel after the first *Monkey Island* game?
Yes. I finished *Monkey Island* and went on vacation for two weeks and when I got back I started working on *Monkey Island 2*. Those games came out within a year of each other.

So why did you decide to leave LucasArts after completing *Monkey Island 2*?
As I've said the games I made there were not major hits, so it was not like I was leading this giant franchise I'd created and selling millions of copies. And I was watching a five-year-old play *Monkey Island* – he couldn't read and there was no voice on the game back then so he really had no idea what was happening. But he was still enthralled with it, being able to click and walk this little guy around the screen and open and close doors and maybe randomly solve a puzzle because of the inventory he was picking up. And that kind of got me thinking, what if we made adventure games, but for kids? Where there was voice and the puzzles were simplified a bit, and that just became very interesting to me. I broached that a bit at Lucasfilm and they really weren't that interested, so being able to leave and start Humongous Entertainment was about being able to fulfil that aim.

So your time at Humongous Entertainment was probably more satisfying for you personally?
We did a lot of games, and they were amazingly successful. We'd come out with a new *Freddi Fish* or a new *Putt-Putt* game and it would sell millions of copies, far more copies than anything I ever did at LucasArts. When I left Humongous we had 360 people working there, compared to around 100 people working at LucasArts when I left that company.

FEELING THE FORCE

Ron on the huge influence of a certain George Lucas movie…

"You know *Star Wars* is an interesting movie because I think if you weren't a kid at the time (or perhaps even alive) I don't think you'd understand the influence that it had and how different it was. If you look at *Star Wars* today it's like every other blockbuster that's been made, but at the time there was literally nothing like it. When my friends and I saw it at the theatre it did just completely blow us away. It definitely changed me and changed a lot of my friends and it was an incredibly influential movie. But I certainly could not have imagined that five years after watching that movie I was going to be working for George Lucas and Lucasfilm."

Can you shed any light on *Good & Evil*, your cancelled project with Cavedog?
It was kind of a hybrid between an RTS and an adventure game. I'd started working on it around the time I'd decided to leave Humongous so it just never really got to a point where it ever got finished.

Was it odd seeing games like *Curse Of Monkey Island* coming out, being a franchise you'd originated but were no longer actively a part of?
Yes, it's always odd to see something you've created taken on by someone else, although I think *Curse* was a good game and when I look at it I'm very proud to have it as part of the franchise. I didn't really enjoy *Escape From Monkey Island*, though; I thought that had a lot of issues…

With *DeathSpank* you worked on a more RPG-like title, employing the same style of writing as you had used on *Monkey Island*.
Yeah it shared the dialogue stuff which I've always enjoyed a lot – the way the dialogue trees are done in those games. But I'm a big fan of RPGs, I really like them a lot. I spent five years in a hardcore raiding guild in *World Of Warcraft*… *DeathSpank* was a kind of merging of the humour and the dialogue of adventure games with something that was a bit more of an RPG, like *Diablo*.

And you also explored other more action-oriented angles with *The Cave* and the puzzle game *Scurvy Scallywags*?
Yes I quite enjoy switching like that, I mean I really hadn't done an adventure game since the stuff I did at Humongous. There have been elements of adventure games in *DeathSpank*, and things like *The Cave* which certainly have a lot of heavy adventure game elements, but I don't know if a lot of people would describe it as a classic adventure game. I do enjoy a lot of different genres and I think sometimes I actually enjoy non-adventure game genres more. At least I enjoy playing them more because I don't understand them as much. When I play an adventure game I feel like my brain does nothing but critique the design half the time. I look at puzzles and I'm second-guessing the designer, and if I go off and play an RPG or a shooter or a mobile puzzle game I'm not critiquing the design at the same level.



Is it ever frustrating having to write so much dialogue for your games when a lot of it may never be seen by some players?
There's a lot of work and it's very tiring but I don't find it frustrating as such. Even

SELECTED TIMELINE

GAMES

- **Koronis Rift** [C64] 1985
- **PHM Pegasus** [Various] 1986
- **Maniac Mansion** [Various] 1987
- **Zak McKracken And The Alien Mindbenders** [Various] 1988
- **Indiana Jones And The Last Crusade** [Various] 1989
- **The Secret Of Monkey Island** [Various] 1990
- **Monkey Island 2: LeChuck's Revenge** [Various] 1991
- **Putt-Putt Joins The Parade** [Various] 1992
- **Freddi Fish And The Case Of The Missing Kelp Seeds** [Various] 1994
- **Total Annihilation** [PC, Mac] 1997
- **Good & Evil** [PC] 1999 (Cancelled)
- **Tales Of Monkey Island (Visiting Professor Of Monkeyology)** [Various] 2009
- **DeathSpank** [Various] 2010
- **The Cave** [Various] 2013
- **Scurvy Scallywags** [iOS] 2013
- **Thimbleweed Park** [Various] 2016

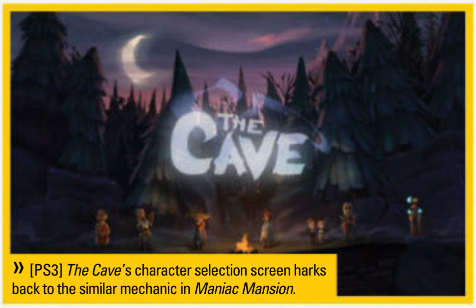
working on the dialogue of *Thimbleweed Park* there's a little bit of glee in putting this very funny joke that's buried down somewhere that I know very few people are going to see, because I know that the people that are going to see it are going to go, 'Wow that's really funny.' So it becomes a sort of in-joke.

Back in 2004 you wrote on your blog that adventure games were officially dead. With your upcoming adventure, *Thimbleweed Park,* you've obviously changed your mind…

I think adventure games did hit their bottom in the late-Noughties as console games really started to take over and franchises like *Call Of Duty* started selling 6 million copies which was just an unheard of number back then. And publishers were just not interested in adventure games at all, so it really did feel like they were dead. But I think there were two things that saved them. Games started to hit a broader audience with mobile gaming and there were now a lot of people playing games on their phones that wouldn't call themselves gamers at all. With things like Steam and the App Store it's just a lot easier for people to create something and go out and sell it and make money, and when you do that you get a higher diversity in games. And games that might have been these dying niches, like adventure games, suddenly have a market now. They're' still smaller than the multi-million dollar mega-games, of course, but because there's now a way to sell them and make money on them, even if it's smaller numbers, they can still gain a lot of traction.

How did *Thimbleweed Park* and working with Gary Winnick again come about?

Gary and I were just reminiscing, talking about how kind of charming those old games were, and how it felt like a lot of that charm had just gone away in a lot of ways. So that spawned the idea that we should make another one of these things that had all of the



» [PS3] *The Cave's* character selection screen harks back to the similar mechanic in *Maniac Mansion.*

sensibilities of those old games. We came up with a story and we decided to do the Kickstarter for it, and about a week before the Kickstarter went live it just felt like we didn't have a good hook for it. We were doing a game that was going to be kind of like *Maniac Mansion* but it felt like we didn't have that thing that everyone could grab on to. So that's where the idea of it being like discovering an old LucasArts game you'd never played before came from.

And the game in fact seems to be from 1987 via Nineties TV shows.

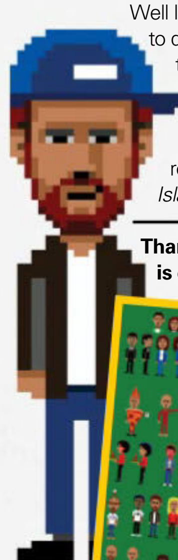
Yeah, and *Twin Peaks* and stuff like that… and those were definitely influences that all happened after *Maniac Mansion*. But the reason we picked 1987 was that was when *Maniac Mansion* came out.

You raised over half a million dollars with the Kickstarter for *Thimbleweed Park,* did that surprise you?

I think that Kickstarter went through this phase when people were raising a whole bunch of money and then it died down. So we were worried because there had been a lot of projects that were struggling to raise a decent amount of money. So we were very pleased that we nearly doubled the money that we were looking for.

How does this budget compare to your classic LucasArts adventures?

Adjusted for inflation it's probably about the same. The original *Monkey Island* cost $135,000 to make, and that was just the development, not including stuff like marketing. But that was 1989, so I think our budget is comparable.



What can you tell us about the of the new game?

Well there are these two detectives that show up in the town of Thimbleweed because a dead body has been found in the river. Their job is to figure out what's going on and who the killer is. And the town is an odd place filled with weird people – a little bit Twin Peaks-y. But it's not really a murder-mystery game; it's not a game where you spend all your time clicking clues to find the killer. The whole thing about the body is more of a MacGuffin, an introduction into this much larger and more interesting, overarching story.

Can we expect to see Chuck The Plant after his recent appearance in *The Cave*?

{laughs} Yeah, I can't make a game without Chuck The Plant, every game I've ever made has had him in it.

Now Disney has the rights to *Monkey Island* what are the possibilities of ever seeing your version of *Monkey Island 3*?

Well let's say it's a very remote possibility. I would like to do a third game, and I think it would be different to what everybody expects because it really would be like *Monkey Island 2* in terms of graphics. Although it might be harder for the broader audience who might not get the whole retro thing. But I think for me to do a *Monkey Island* it has to be like those old games.

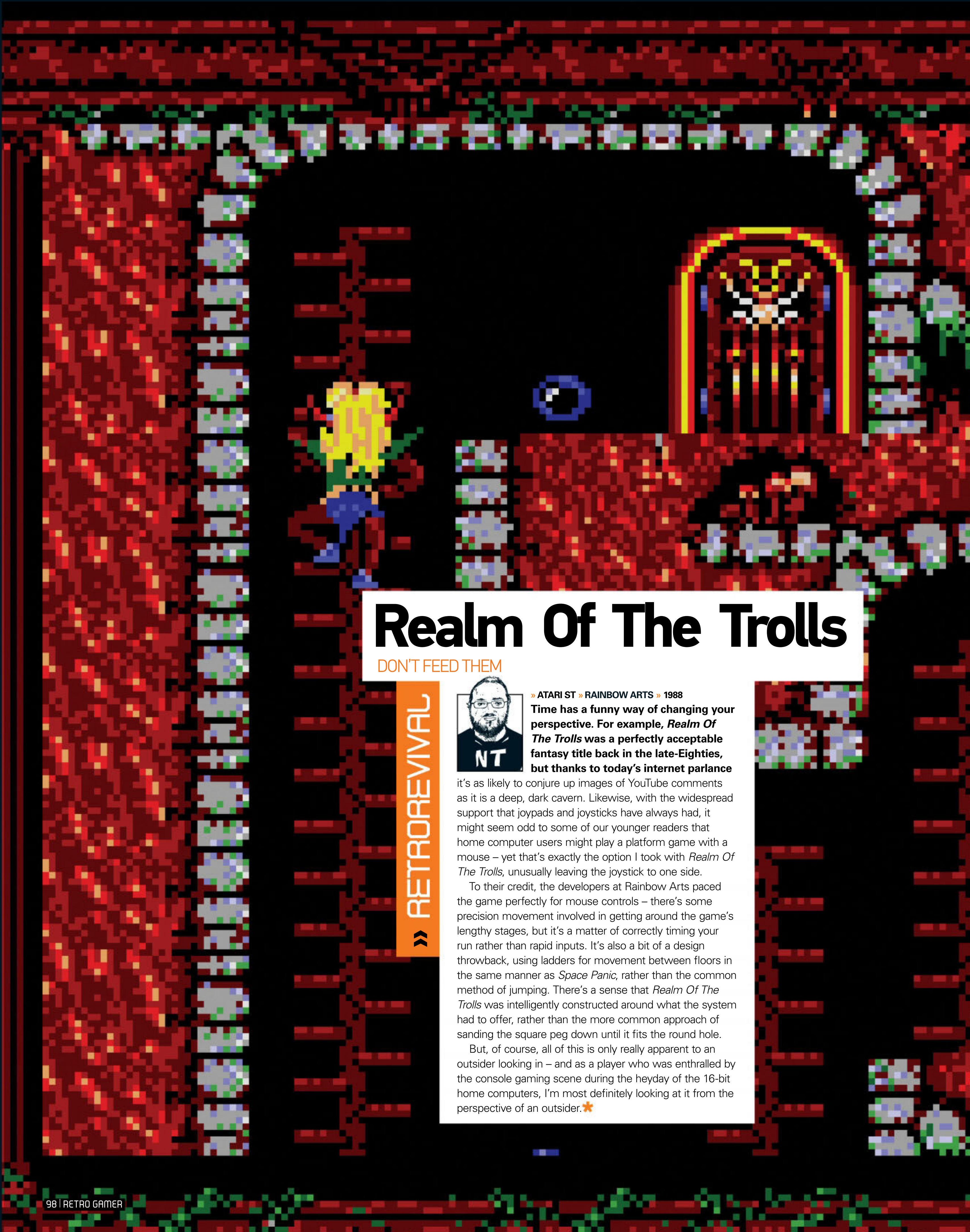
Thanks to Ron for this time. *Thimbleweed Park* is due for release in August 2016.



» Gary Winnick's character graphics for *Thimbleweed Park* are almost identical to those seen in his work on *Maniac Mansion.*

» [PC] In *Thimbleweed Park's* convenience store we meet a plant that may or may not be related to Chuck…





» RETROREVIVAL

Realm Of The Trolls

DON'T FEED THEM

» ATARI ST » RAINBOW ARTS » 1988

Time has a funny way of changing your perspective. For example, *Realm Of The Trolls* was a perfectly acceptable fantasy title back in the late-Eighties, but thanks to today's internet parlance it's as likely to conjure up images of YouTube comments as it is a deep, dark cavern. Likewise, with the widespread support that joypads and joysticks have always had, it might seem odd to some of our younger readers that home computer users might play a platform game with a mouse – yet that's exactly the option I took with *Realm Of The Trolls*, unusually leaving the joystick to one side.

To their credit, the developers at Rainbow Arts paced the game perfectly for mouse controls – there's some precision movement involved in getting around the game's lengthy stages, but it's a matter of correctly timing your run rather than rapid inputs. It's also a bit of a design throwback, using ladders for movement between floors in the same manner as *Space Panic*, rather than the common method of jumping. There's a sense that *Realm Of The Trolls* was intelligently constructed around what the system had to offer, rather than the more common approach of sanding the square peg down until it fits the round hole.

But, of course, all of this is only really apparent to an outsider looking in – and as a player who was enthralled by the console gaming scene during the heyday of the 16-bit home computers, I'm most definitely looking at it from the perspective of an outsider.*


SCORE
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HALL:000
ENERGY
MENTAL
MAGIC
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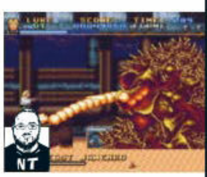


>> This month we take a look at the latest game in the Darius series. We also check out the new Colin McRae, sorry, Dirt game, and play through the Steam version of Mushi-himesama (we know it's not hyphenated but it wouldn't fit otherwise)

PICKS OF THE MONTH



DARRAN
Dariusburst Chronicle Saviours
The Sony versions come with insane price tags, but this remains a lovingly crafted tribute to *Darius*.



NICK
Super Star Wars
Being able to carry *Super Star Wars* around on my Vita is great, because bus drivers get rather funny about me setting up my Super Nintendo.



[PS4] A giant ammonite is just one of the aquatic bosses that lies in wait…

THERE'S SOMETHING FISHY ABOUT THIS ALIEN FORCE…

Dariusburst Chronicle Saviours



INFORMATION

- » **FEATURED SYSTEM:** PS4
- » **ALSO AVAILABLE ON:** PC, PS VITA
- » **RELEASED:** OUT NOW
- » **PRICE:** £49.99 (£32.99 VITA)
- » **PUBLISHER:** DEGICA
- » **DEVELOPER:** PYRAMID, CHARA-ANI
- » **PLAYERS:** 1-4 (1 VITA)

BRIEF HISTORY

» While popular as a cult shooter, the main problem with celebrating *Darius* is that you rarely get to play the arcade versions in their native 4:1 super-widescreen format anymore. Now, with large panels and super-size monitors common, Taito is giving it a proper crack, and we're pleasantly surprised with how well it works.

A changing perception of value in gaming over the last few decades has really done a number on a bunch of developers and publishers. It used to be that a great puzzle game, a strong rhythm-action release with just a handful of songs or a killer niche title could command full price just like everything else, but times sure have changed – budget labels, Steam sales, mobile 'impulse buy' pricing, free-to-play… it's all gradually whittled away perceived value for certain kinds of games, to the point where many people have been conditioned to think that a 2D platformer, a seemingly simple puzzle game or anything that looks in any way retro should cost no more than whatever shrapnel they might have in their pockets. So naturally, when Taito comes along with a revamped version of a five-year-old arcade game and tells us that it costs the same as the likes of *Star Wars Battlefront* and *FIFA 16*, eyebrows are going to be raised… some raised so far that they've left faces entirely. Trust us, we've seen it happen.

It feels unfair, though, to let the issue of pricing dominate coverage of a game when such a topic is purely subjective, so let's leave it at this – if Taito's audacious price point has already mortally offended you and you would never consider paying full whack for a shooter, no matter how good, then just move along. You know this isn't for you already. But if you haven't lost sight of the fact that developers and publishers should be allowed to charge what they think a game is worth, by all means read on and see if there might be something hiding behind the headline for you here. Hell, hardcore shooter collectors will tell you of the obscene amounts they've spent importing Japan-only releases, so this localised version might even stand to *save* you money, when you think about it. So how's the game itself?

Well, it's really quite good. Followers of the series will know that Taito pretty much made a (fishing) rod for its own back by deciding that the Belser army would exclusively pilot aquatic-themed ships and so variety doesn't reach far beyond what you might you might see in an aquarium, instantly making the alien/robot/whatever freedom of games like *R-Type* and *Gradius* that much more interesting. Well, unless you're really into fish, though, to be fair, there are some

WHY NOT TRY

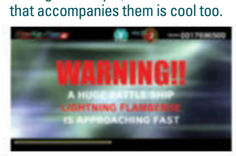
▼ SOMETHING OLD
DARIUS TWIN (SNES)



▼ SOMETHING NEW
REVOLVER360 RE:ACTOR (PC)



» [PS4] Boss introduction screens are a genre staple, and the klaxon that accompanies them is cool too.



THE MODES IN DETAIL

Learn about Dariusburst: Chronicle Saviours here

ORIGINAL (AC) MODE

■ Play through the 2011 arcade game, with the option of using ships added after the coin-op release or play with infinite lives, though this option does block leaderboard placement. Since the arcade game used two widescreen monitors for a 32:9 display, this mode will only use a strip across the middle of your TV but it is surprisingly playable.



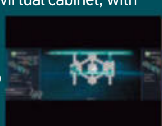
ORIGINAL (EX) MODE

■ A jazzed-up and much tougher version of the arcade game, featuring new modes and bosses and a hell of a lot more stuff to dodge/destroy/both. Once again, there's a free play option that limits leaderboard usage and anyone bar experts will need it – this mode can get obscenely hard. It's 32:9 again too, so get ready to sit a bit closer to the TV…



CHRONICLE MODE

■ A gigantic mode and one that doesn't seem to end. Thousands of challenges based on different areas of the AC and EX modes (plus additional stipulations on ship/power-up usage) are laid out on multiple planets per virtual cabinet, with credit given for not only the best score but the first player to complete a mission. Get exploring!



CS MODE

■ The only mode that uses the full screen, this is effectively a more linear twist on Chronicle Mode but one that lets you really drink in the awesome creature design. After playing the super-widescreen modes, it can feel a little cramped or chaotic at times, but stick to one resolution for most of a sitting and it shouldn't interfere too badly with your scores.



damn clever and cool attack patterns even among the more 'standard' fishy boss designs, and there are loads of the damn things too. Each of the 24 stages in AC and EX modes has its own giant aqua-robo guardian (some are palette swaps, although the fights are quite different) with even more, including a handful of brand new ones, hiding away in other modes. AC and EX modes are where things are most straightforward – simply pick three stages and blast away. But once you get into the real meat of the package, the rulebook goes out the window and things get a lot more finteresting. Yeah, we went there…

Were it just a straight arcade port then sure, we'd have probably had an issue with the price in the first place. But as soon as you start to take stock of how much there is to do outside of that, that's when it really becomes apparent that Taito wanted this to be a fitting sendoff for the *Dariusburst* chapter of its legacy. Chronicle mode, which made it into the arcade version in an updated release, is a fascinating and unimaginably huge set of remixes of levels, rules, ships and bosses, rewarding exploration as much as prowess as all players on the same virtual cabinet push to unlock and claim all available stages as a community. Given that you can switch virtual cabs at any point (and each has different map layouts), you could easily lose months here, whether it's pushing your skills to the limit to expand the map for other players or grinding the same few stages over and over again until your name is back on top of the leaderboards.

Mechanically, *Dariusburst* has its fair share of interesting mechanics, not that it's overly ready to share the details about them with you. In terms of in-game help, there's little outside of the brief attract screen advice on hand, and even that is quickly whisked away whenever the virtual machine realises it's hungry for money. While it may have been made to *eat* quarters, it certainly



» [PS4] Regular enemies are plentiful but rarely present much of a threat. Just let your Burst laser do all the work.



» [PC] If you've got the kit for it, the PC version can be played across two displays for the ultimate experience.

gives no quarter to the *Assassin's Creed* generation – expect to find out how ships differ from one another or how advanced techniques like Counter-Bursts work without flicking through the manual and you'll find yourself out of luck. It's nothing too complex and you can happily play the game for hours without appreciating these nuances, but it only gets better as you dig deeper. There's an equally nice risk/reward balance to power-up progression, too. Basic shots and lasers can eat through certain enemy projectiles but once you upgrade to the beam weapon, your only defences against incoming flak are quick reflexes and clever Burst usage. Projectile types in general are plentiful and interesting, and the lack of a catch-all smart bomb option to clear the screen is actually quite welcome… it never really gets into bullet hell territory anyway and with smart positioning and movement, you can dance around most threats once you get good. The armour gauge is a nice concession that allows players to take hits as they learn bosses and levels, but experts will want to push themselves until they can get through without a scratch.

Screen size isn't too much of an issue, even when half of it isn't used (it's perfectly playable even in AC mode on Vita's modest screen, so any home display should be fine) and there's the fallback of the excellent CS mode in case you do end up feeling like you're in the cheap seats. Loads of bosses (including Gigantic Bite, the toughest *Darius* boss created), loads of stages and loads of permutations thanks to smart mode design make this a rich and tight shooter, as broad as it is deep and happy to service all your fish-blasting needs for the foreseeable future. ✱

Luke Albigés

In a nutshell

A oddly versatile shooter, presented in a package that feels bottomless. While it may not have the variety of something like *R-Type Final*, there's more than enough here to keep fans blasting robotic sea life for months.

8 — RetroGamer_Mag scored **8** for Dariusburst Chronicle Saviours
Follow our scores on JUST A SCORE







RETROROUND-UP

>> Every month we look at all the classics and latest releases that are available to buy or download



Super Star Wars

» **System:** PS Vita (tested) PS4 » **Cost:** £7.99 » **Buy it from:** PS Store

We were surprised as anyone when *Super Star Wars* was released alongside *Star Wars Battlefront*. Sadly, it's only available for PlayStation 4 and PS Vita owners, meaning PC gamers and Xbox One owners will be missing out, but it's certainly worth picking up if you do have one of Sony's consoles.

For those that have never played it, *Super Star Wars* is an intense run-and-gun in the style of *Contra* and *Metal Slug*, set mainly against the backdrop of Tatooine. Initially you'll play as Luke Skywalker, but as the game progresses you'll eventually be able to choose between Luke, Chewbacca and Han Solo. There's a large selection of power-ups to collect, a selection of imposing bosses to battle and some increasingly tough platforming in certain sections of the game. While the majority of levels are simple side-on affairs, a few stages allow you to tear around in a landspeeder, fly across the Death Star's surface in an X-wing and take part in the famous trench run. It holds up well today, although there are some unfair difficulty spikes, with certain bosses proving extremely tough to defeat. Many will also hate the fact that progression at some points it quite tough without an upgraded gun, meaning they'll most likely opt for the new 'save anywhere' feature that has been implemented.

Other changes to *Super Star Wars* include a variety of screen filters, including scanlines, the ability to play in the correct screen ratio, as well as some thoughtful achievements. Cross Buy and cross saving is included and there are online leaderboards too. Interestingly, the slowdown of the original has been removed, meaning some sections are needlessly hard — it's noticeable when you slide under the crushers in the Sandcrawler — which puts a dampener on the overall experience. You get used to it of course, and we'd argue that many won't notice it, but it still irks us.

Super Star Wars may be showing it's age a bit now, but it remains a competent blaster and is certainly the best one in the series. It's complemented by an equally solid conversion and some decent extras.

7 — RetroGamer_Mag scored **7** for Super Star Wars
Follow our scores on JUST A SCORE



» [PS Vita] The removal of slowdown makes this section very tricky. Tread carefully…

> **"Interestingly, the slowdown of the original has been removed"**



» [PS Vita] This was a great showcase of Mode 7 on the SNES and it still looks very cool today.



» [PS Vita] Some of the bosses are extremely hard to defeat if you meet it with a weaker weapon.

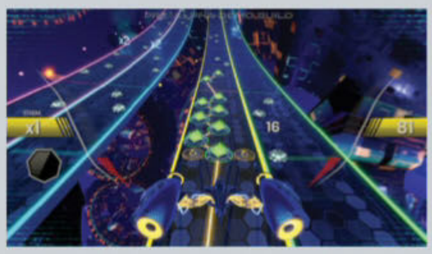


Mushihimesama

» **System:** PC
» **Buy it for:** £14.99 » **Buy it from:** Steampowered.com

If you've not played this manic Cave shooter you're in for a treat. Known as *Bug Princess* in the West, *Mushihimesama* is a frantic one or two-player game where you blast bugs and battle insane bosses that throw out ridiculously intricate bullet patterns. It's not the easiest of games to learn, but once you master its scoring system you'll discover it to be a challenging shooter. Three distinct difficulty settings are offered Novice, Original and Arranged, and it's a faithful adaptation of the Xbox 360 game that was released back in 2012. Having to pay extra for Version 1.5 is disappointing, but this remains a solid blaster and a great insight into one of the genre's most popular developers.

8 — RetroGamer_Mag scored **8** for Mushihimesama
Follow our scores on JUST A SCORE



Amplitude

» **System:** PS4
» **Buy it for:** £15.99 » **Buy it from:** PS Store

If you're expecting a HD update of the original PS2 game you're going to be disappointed as the licensed tracks are missing and a newer, less varied selection has been added. Worry not, though, as the gameplay is intact, meaning you zoom along six musical highways matching notes to keep the music playing. Miss a note and you'll disrupt the highway, losing energy in the process. Lose too much and it's game over. While *Amplitude*'s campaign is a little lacking, it's complemented by an excellent multiplayer mode that caters for four players and allows lots of sabotage opportunities. It's music won't appeal to everyone, but there's no denying it remains a very polished game.

7 — RetroGamer_Mag scored **7** for Amplitude
Follow our scores on JUST A SCORE



Dirt Rally

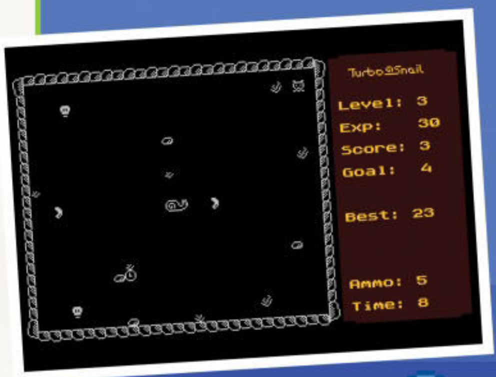
» **System:** PC » **Buy it for:** £39.99
» **Buy it from:** Online, retail

It's amazing to think that the *Colin McRae Rally* series is now 18 years old. The latest addition to the series is a big change, straddling the area between arcade game and sim (although its similar handling on different surfaces and when using different cars means it still falls largely into the former camp). Events-wise, there are just three types on offer: Hillclimb, RallyX and Rally, but they are extensive enough and quite challenging due to the often ferocious AI of opponents. The ability to play in different time periods, Sixties, Seventies and Eighties, as well as modern day, is a nice touch and it looks incredible on a good rig, but the high difficulty curve won't be for everyone.

7 — RetroGamer_Mag scored **7** for Dirt Rally
Follow our scores on JUST A SCORE

Welcome to Homebrew





FRESHLY-BREWED FOR 2016

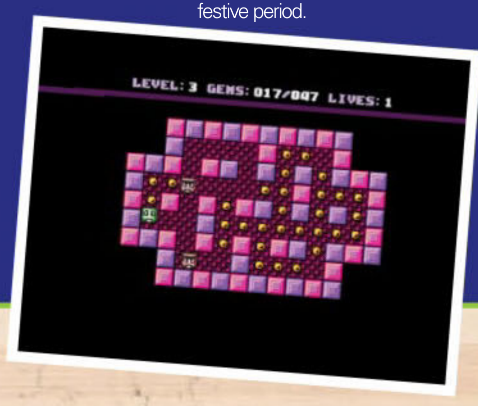
We've mentioned Code Red's strange *Zerosphere* for the Amiga when the preview version was released in August, and we're pleased to say that the final version of this collect-'em-up is now available to download at Kikstart.eu/zerosphere-amiga. Poor Squinty is plonked into multi-directionally scrolling stages but can't actually see his surroundings properly unless he squints so, since that can't be done all of the time, the player needs to make him narrow his eyes for a few seconds and then try to collect diamonds and avoid hazards from memory.

Moving over to the 8-bit systems we have *Pengo Quest* on the Spectrum from developer Gabriele Amore. As the name might suggest, this is his take on the classic coin-op *Pengo* where the player must destroy a quota of blocks to open an exit to the next level; the author has said that it's only 90 per cent finished in the World Of Spectrum thread behind Kikstart.eu/pengo-quest-spec but we still found it playable even in its incomplete state.

There's been not one but two recent C64 releases that use the ROM-based character set effectively; *Ladybug 2015* from *Mr Nop* is a conversion of his own action game for the Commodore PET which we enjoyed playing back in 2013, while Software Of Sweden's *Petscii Poker 2016* is, probably unsurprisingly, a bug-fixed and improved version of their previous PETSCII-flavoured card game.

And while we're on the subject of simple but fun games, amongst other delights on the annual Atari 8-bit New Years Disk was a neat little shoot-'em-up called *Blowsub* by Playsoft; Kikstart.eu/nyd-2016 leads to Pouet.net where all five disks were released on New Year's Day can be downloaded and at the time of writing there's also a highscore competition going on in the Atari 8-Bit Computers section over at the AtariAge.com forums.

Finally there's the news from December that #msxdev – the competition for all MSX platforms rather than the MSXDev which is specific for the original hardware, and has two interesting entries at the time of writing – has been cancelled due to lack of interest; sadder still is the comment from the organisers saying that they don't expect it to return. French Amstrad CPC website Push'N'Pop disappeared over Christmas, too, so that's two resources lost during the festive period.



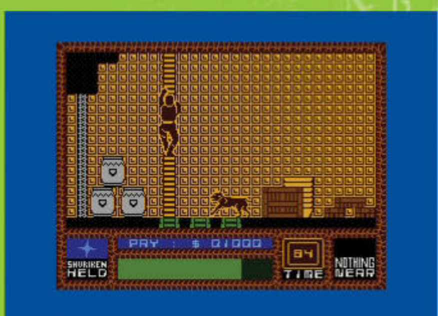
NEW GAMES NEEDED

If you have a homebrew project you would like to see featured then please contact us at:
retrogamer@imagine-publishing.co.uk



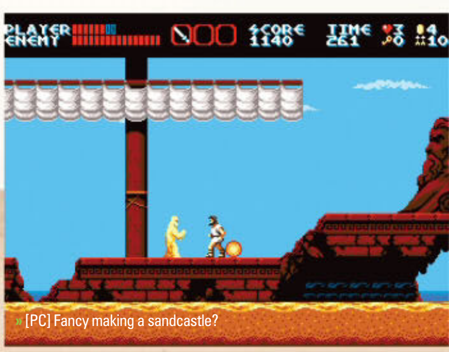
SET IT STRAIGHT

Software conversion experts Mariuszw and Tezz have been working on a C64 to Atari 8-bit port of Durell's *Saboteur* since last November and, although there's a few more things pending on their 'to do' list, they have released a download of the pretty much complete game on the first of January. The announcement is stealthily concealed in the shadows behind Kikstart.eu/saboteur-a8.



HACKING AND SLASHING

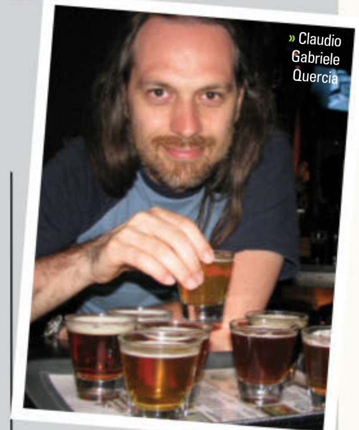
The Goddess Athena speaks to the fisherman Defkalion, warning of a curse on his home Issyos and steering him straight towards adventure in Locomalito's latest retro themed action game for Windows-based PCs. Amongst the inspirations listed on his website behind Kikstart.eu/issyos-win are 8-bit scrolling action games like *Rastan*, *Ninja Gaiden* or *Rygar* and the special effects work of Ray Harryhausen.



» [PC] Fancy making a sandcastle?

Homebrew heroes

Everybody likes penguins and developer Claudio Gabriele Quercia of Disjoind Studio has written a series of games around one, so Retro Gamer waddled over to have a chat about fish and the latest release for the Master System



» Claudio Gabriele Quercia

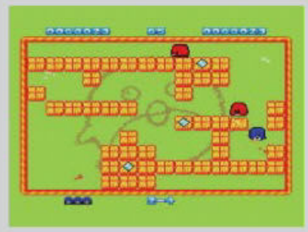
So, where did the idea behind *Waimanu Scary Monsters Saga* originally come from?
Waimanu Scary Monsters Saga is actually the latest port of a game we made a few years ago when we got interested in Nintendo DS homebrewing. We wanted to make a new game taking inspiration from old classics. My pal Antonio 'The Dig' and I decided to remake *Pengo* since we liked it, and it hadn't been adapted yet. We involved Enrico 'genecyst' for the art and Paolo 'Mu Ho' for the music and adding some spice on top of the original game mechanics for *Waimanu: Daring Slides*. Soon the GBA version came too, with *Waimanu: Grinding Blocks Adventure*. Then my old Master System emerged from out of nowhere and I started reading technical documents about it; I challenged my fellows to do what seemed an almost impossible port. They irresponsibly accepted.

Roughly how long did it take to develop from start to end and how many people were involved in the project?
It took us about two years. A few times we had to slow down or even stop because of real-life issues, but we never gave up because we believed in the project so much. Besides the efforts of the four of us, I personally received a lot of support from the SMSPower! community, especially when I started with Z80… I had never written an entire game in assembly language before!

What was the best moment for you as the game's programmer?
I'd say the first time I saw my code running on my own Master System. It was a great feeling, although at the same moment I realized I had a bunch of serious bugs to fix.

And is there anything you would have done differently with the gift of hindsight?
Well, to be 100 per cent honest we aren't really sure we implemented the difficulty curve well enough. We tried to make the game fairly simple in the first levels, so as to give everyone a chance to learn how to play properly, and make it harder and harder as the player progresses. We probably made it a tad too hard towards the end.

What sort of feedback have you received from the Master System gamers?
It's always tough to get attention on the internet, but we received some nice words of appreciation from other Master System homebrewers and retro gaming enthusiasts, and that's enough for us to keep improving.

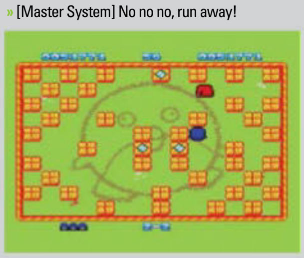


» [Master System] Not the safest place to hide.

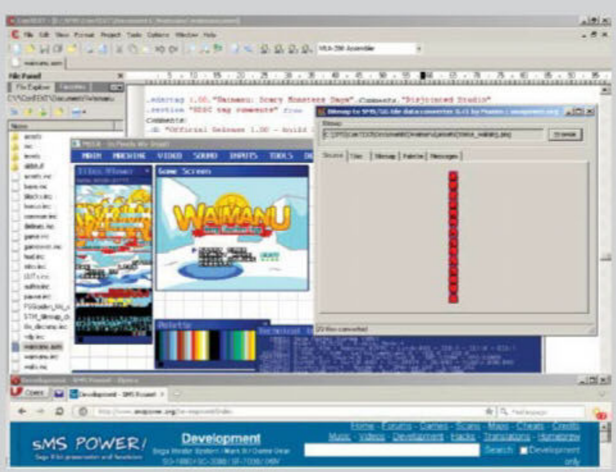
And finally, do you and Disjointed Studio have any future plans that our readers might be interested in?
We're already working on a little new game for Master System, which I'm coding in C using devkitSMS – the SDCC based developer kit I started putting together a year ago. We'd also like to expand the Waimanu universe, so in the next adventure we'll give our courageous little blue penguin an occasion to counter-attack the invaders and to explore new worlds. But we'd rather not reveal too much at the moment.



» [Master System] No no no, run away!



» [Master System] Surprise incoming in 3, 2, 1…



Even more Homebrew REVIEWS

Do you remember?

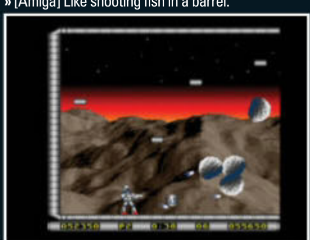
What happens if you take a cutesy action game like *Pang* and give it a *Turrican*-like makeover? One possible result is David Papworth's 1993 game *Super Obliteration* on the Amiga, where the bubbles have been replaced by spinning asteroids which must be smashed into dust by the occupant of a combat suit.

Destroying some of the rocks reveals power-ups which will upgrade the gun or temporarily freeze the rocks, but just grabbing every item that appears isn't a wise strategy; the smart bombs break everything down and can leave hard to avoid debris if used too early, while other icons can mess with the player controls or decrease the gun's power.

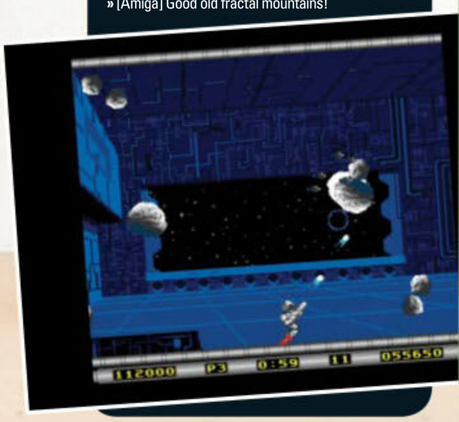
Super Obliteration is a very solid, no-nonsense shooter which is significantly better than many of its commercial contemporaries. Take a look at Kikstart.eu/super-oblit-amiga.



» [Amiga] Like shooting fish in a barrel.



» [Amiga] Good old fractal mountains!





» [Atari 8-bit] One question that we've pondered; why doesn't the bucket explode?



» [Atari 8-bit] Slowly putting some of the pieces together before time runs out.

ABBUC SOFTWARE COMPETITION 2015

» **FORMAT:** ATARI 8-BIT » **DEVELOPER:** VARIOUS» **DOWNLOAD:** KIKSTART.EU/FILES/ABBUC_2015.PHP » **PRICE:** FREE

Fans of Atari 8-bit homebrew always look forward to the annual ABBUC Software Competition because over the years it has seen the release of some fantastic games. This year there were seven entries, with two being action-oriented, three leaning more towards puzzle-solving and the remaining two very much a test of reactions.

Starting with the action-oriented titles, *Bomber* is a conversion of a C64 magazine covermount game which was, in turn, was based on Activision's 2600 classic *Kaboom!* where falling bombs must be caught in a bucket. On the platforming front is *Little Game*, an appropriately-titled and somewhat primitive looking platformer which proved to be frustratingly challenging in part due to the unusual control scheme.

On the puzzling side of things, *3plex* is a challenge against the clock to place an 'L' shaped piece in different orientations within a crowded space, the size of which can be varied in order to alter the difficulty level. In *Jim Slide*, the titular hero can't stop once he's set in motion and must be guided through levels to the exit, collecting items and using the environment to line him up for the next move. The ubiquitous match three game this time was Victor Parada's *Toy Swap* which features tiles that must be disposed of in order to proceed to the next stage.

Finally, the reaction based-titles are Kendallsoft's *Gravity* – a variation on arcade machine *Stacker* where a row of coloured bricks bounces back and forth across the screen and must be stopped directly above the existing tower formed by previous goes, otherwise only the overlapping areas survive to the next pass – and *Joystick Mastah* from Sikor where the player is challenged to move the joystick in the direction indicated on screen.

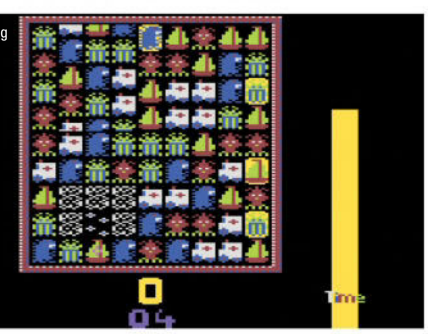
The quality is good this year, with *Bomber*, *Jim Slide* and *Toy Swap* standing out; *Joystick Mastah* is the weakest of the bunch, as it offers less in the way of gameplay than the other entries.

RetroGamer_Mag scored **8** for Abbuc Software Competition 2015

8

Follow our scores on JUST A SCORE

» [Atari 8-bit] Tidying up the toybox a little by making the contents explode!



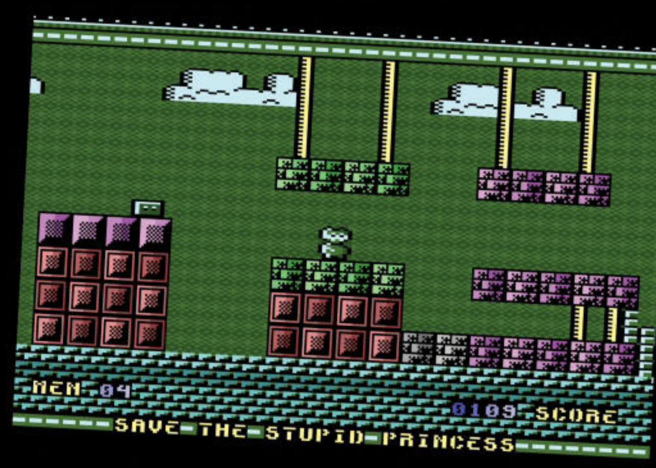
DORK DAVE AND THE DIRTY TRICK

» **FORMAT:** COMMODORE 16 » **DEVELOPER:** MISFIT
» **DOWNLOAD:** KIKSTART.EU/DORK-DAVE-C16 » **PRICE:** FREE

The princess has managed to get herself captured again so Dave The Dork is, rather grudgingly, going to be the creature to save her this time. There's also some quite strict collision detection to deal with and heavy inertia on the controls to fight too, which will often see poor Dave impaled, zapped or plummeting to his doom.

This isn't an easy game and the designer seems to have littered even the earliest stages with tricks designed to kill or at least trap an unwary Dork; getting used to the controls and learning each stage is an absolute must because taking the wrong path or headbutting one of the blocks mid-jump can reduce the chances of completing a stage. Easily frustrated gamers should consider looking elsewhere, but it's quite enjoyable for those who want a challenge.

RetroGamer_Mag scored **7** for
7
Dork Dave And The Dirty Trick
Follow our scores on JUST A SCORE



» [CC16] Being chased down a narrow corridor never feels safe.

WAIMANU SCARY MONSTERS SAGA

» **FORMAT:** SEGA MASTER SYSTEM » **DEVELOPER:** DISJOINTED STUDIO
» **DOWNLOAD:** KIKSTART.EU/WAIMANU-SMS » **PRICE:** FREE

Aliens have begun their invasion but, despite being unarmed and a penguin, Waimanu plans to defeat them; he's going to do this in grand *Pengo* tradition as well, by pushing blocks around. There are hidden items to reveal which can help in this task, including a tidal wave which washes in and takes the nasties out.

The playfield starts out cluttered with blocks which keep Waimanu and his opponents apart, at least to begin with, but those barriers are soon either moved or eroded so, unless they're are taken care of reasonably swiftly, the poor penguin can find himself in an open space with very few options to hand… or wing. *Waimanu SMS* is a nice implementation of *Pengo* with some neat additions and solid presentation.

RetroGamer_Mag scored **9** for
9
Waimanu Scary Monsters Saga
Follow our scores on JUST A SCORE



» [Master System] Things are looking rather bleak because there are nasties pretty much everywhere! It's a good job we have Waimanu to help.

PIGGY BANK

» **FORMAT:** INTELLIVISION » **DEVELOPER:** BBWW GAMES
» **DOWNLOAD:** KIKSTART.EU/PB-INTV » **PRICE:** $40

This is the story of a piglet who wants to bring home the bacon by collecting coins. Fortunately there are loads scattered around the platforms, but they're protected by the local wildlife as well. He probably couldn't have made a rasher decision really and if the poor pig dies his relatives don't get a sausage.

There's a need for very precise leaping even from the earliest stages and the game is pretty tough even for fans of the genre, with each stage requiring thought too; easier said than done when there's a clock to worry about as well, but the remaining time is translated into score so finding the most optimal solution to each screen are rewarded.

Ordering a cartridge is done by showing interest in forum thread (see above link) and we're told that it's best to contact forum BBWW directly about shipping options.



» [Intellivision] Waiting for a safe spot before setting up for a jump.

RetroGamer_Mag scored **8** for
8
Piggy Bank
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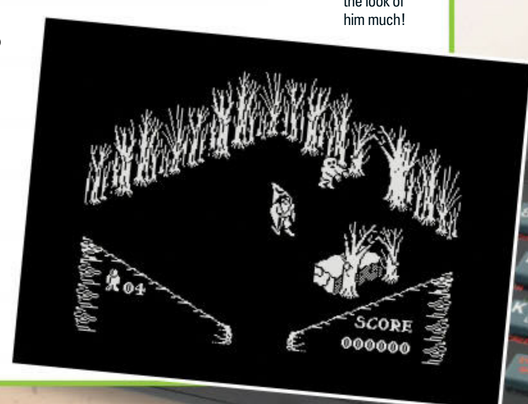
Round-up

Hopefully coming soon to the Atari STE is *R-Type Deluxe*, a rewrite of the classic coin-op which takes advantage of the STE hardware where the original conversion by Factor 5 didn't. Kikstart.eu/rtd-prv-ste goes to the Atari-Forum discussion, where signing up will also allow access to the download.

On the subject of upgrades, coding supremo Andre Baune has taken the ZX81 version of Kabuto Factory's horror adventure *Zombi Terror* and made several improvements to speed the program up; this new iteration and his previous works are available from Kikstart.eu/andre-zx81.

Finally there's more news from Mariuszw, this time about an Atari 8-bit port of Ultimate's isometric 3D game *Pentagram* which this time uses code that he's converted from the Spectrum. Kikstart.eu/pentagram-a8 goes to the forum thread for more information.

» Atari 8-bit] We don't like the look of him much!



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STAR LETTER

THE BEST THAT MONEY CAN BUY

Hi **Retro Gamer**,
After reading your Neo-Geo piece I became fascinated with the idea of luxury consoles. It makes perfect sense, after all – we have luxury variants of just about everything else from cars to hotels, so why should consoles be any different? Obviously the Neo-Geo is out there, but I'm not sure if any other machines fall into such a category. Do other luxury consoles exist, and if so is there the possibility of a feature about them in the future?
Richard Spall

They do, although we don't include machines like the 3DO, which were just a tad too expensive for the mass market appeal they hoped to achieve. Capcom's CPS Changer was a device which allowed players to play Capcom CPS-1 arcade boards at home with a TV output and SNES controllers – we covered it in issue 84. Other console variants can be considered to have been positioned as luxury items too – the Sega Multi-Mega was known to have a limited production run and high price.

In recent times we've normally seen very expensive versions of regular machines, such as a gold-plated Xbox One, or modified versions of older machines such as Analogue Interactive's NT (a NES with a new case, multi-region support, four control ports and RGB output). However, the Japanese manufacturer Examu's EX-Board fits the definition of a luxury console to some degree, as it features interchangeable game cartridges and supports home usage with USB arcade sticks and VGA/S-Video output. There's a rental programme operating that allows players to take them home, much like the original rental market for the Neo-Geo AES back in 1990.



» Have you ever seen Capcom's CPS Changer in action? We're guessing the answer is probably "No"…

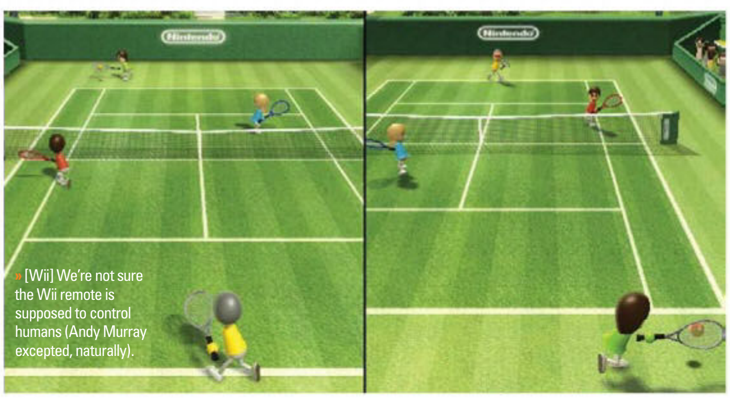
DISCUSSED THIS MONTH

THAT Feature…

We expected that the 'Your Greatest Games Ever!' feature would generate a lot of interest, but we're still staggered by the sheer amount of attention it has received. Some loved it, others hated it for dismissing so many classic 8-bit games, but *everyone* is talking about it. Even us.







» [Wii] We're not sure the Wii remote is supposed to control humans (Andy Murray excepted, naturally).

TENNIS ELBOW

Dear **RG**,
I just thought you'd like to know what happened to me recently. I'm one of those late latecomers to the Wii and purchased one second-hand, I had to see what all the fuss was all about. Well, after having fired up *Wii Sports* and trying my hand at Tennis, I found that no matter how I tried I couldn't get the thing to do what I wanted; no matter how I swished and lobbed and dropshotted, it seemed like the character wasn't listening at all to my suggestions and had a life of its own.

Suddenly, though, out of the corner of my eye, I noticed out the window in the apartment's tennis court below that the player most adjacent to me seemed to almost mimic my waves and swishes and was shouting in utter bewilderment at his sudden loss of motor control. It soon dawned on me that I was not actually in control of my on-screen character at all but of this poor fellow beneath me trying to play a relaxing game of Sunday tennis.

So I did what I felt anyone else would do in my position, and waved the nunchuk around frantically, around my head in large loops, banged it incessantly against the wall, etc., until the wretched chap could no longer take the endless backflips and supernatural hyperextensions and I finally, gently put the offending control down on the coffee table, with a most triumphant and satisfying grin. I determined that day that the Wii was the very best console ever made.

Err… this really did happen.
Robert Roemer

We like the Wii more than it seems the average gamer does. Having said that, the Wii remote is only meant to do that to Andy Murray – it was a function added to both the controller and the tennis professional as part of a secret conspiracy to ensure a British Wimbledon winner. That's why we consider ourselves gold medallists. It's also why we think you should send your controller back to Nintendo for repair, as it's not supposed to do that to amateurs.

THE FORCE IS STRONG

Hi there,
I loved your article about the *Star Wars* games and, in particular, the classic arcade version of the game.

Please find attached a few photos I took of an original *Star Wars* arcade cabinet, located at the Arcade Club in Bury. This game is truly awesome and seems to be timeless in pure entertainment value.

Keep up the good work!
Steve

Thanks Steve! We're experiencing peak *Star Wars* love at the moment, so we're glad to have shared that passion for a great



» Whenever we see pictures from Arcade Club, we rue the fact that we're so far from Bury.

Don't forget to follow us online for all the latest retro updates

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CONTACT US

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» The Videopac is certainly a striking machine, and it's a shame that it is so often forgotten.

game. It's great that Arcade Club still has it available for people to enjoy – we can't imagine that there are many left in the wild.

VIDEOPAC-MAN

Hi guys,

I just wanted to say a thank you for the hardware feature on the Philips Videopac G7000 in issue 149 – it's a console that I didn't really know anything about and hadn't seen in the mag before, and I was amazed to see that you were able to get hold of someone involved in making a machine that came out in 1978. It just goes to show that there's still plenty more work for you guys to do in documenting our gaming past.

Kevin Chapman



» [Arcade] We've heard that Jon can kick a football roughly this hard – that's just a rumour, mind…

Thanks Kevin – it was a nice feature to get into the mag, as the Seventies is still a time that isn't well-covered. Plus, Nick was pleased to get another one of his machines into a photoshoot.

GOOOAL!

Hi **RG**,

I'm hoping you can help me out. Back in the Nineties, I used to play a football game where the players could get special abilities, like kicking the ball so hard it'd strip the keeper's kit off. The only problem is that I can't remember what it was called! Do you know what it was, and if you do are there any home versions of it that I could get?

Cheers,

Andy Hill

Andy, you're in luck – we know this one. It's called *Taito Power Goal* (or *Hat Trick Hero 95* in other regions), and you had to pay to get those special powers. It was quite funny when it happened, though. Every tackle looked like it was performed by an enraged Eric Cantona.



From the forum

» www.retrogamer.net/forum

Every month, Retro Gamer asks a question on the forum and prints the best replies. This month we wanted to know…

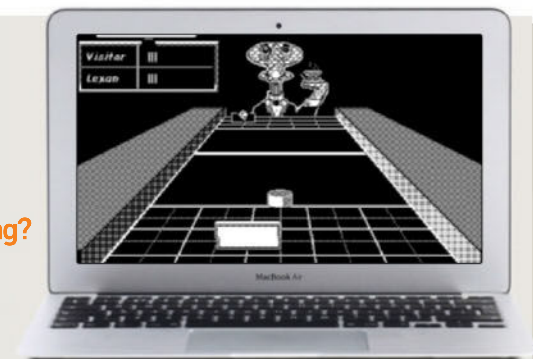
What's your experience of Mac gaming?

theantmeister
I played a lot of games on my iMac back in the late Nineties and in the early Noughties. It was the only computer I had, so I didn't have much choice. I mostly played ports of PC games like *Star Wars Episode I: Racer, Deus Ex* and *Rune*. I did play a bit of *Marathon*, but I could never really get into it. Tried a few of Pangea's games - *Nanosaur* was fairly impressive. The most impressive thing the iMac did was run CVGS though. The accuracy of the emulation was incredible!

Antiriad2097
I don't think I've ever used a Mac, never mind gamed on one.

joefish
I think the one and only time that I ever tried anything resembling a game on a Mac was the 1984 Macintosh tutorial, Mousing Around, which involved connecting dots to draw a star and then dragging a mouse graphic through a small maze!

necronom
I used a Mac a few times at college, and my brother has had a few recently, but I don't think I've ever played a videogame on one. I did set up an emulator on my Amiga 1200, but I can't remember doing much on it apart from say, 'Oh, look my Amiga is emulating a Mac!'



Megamixer
Only ever used a Mac briefly and it had some sort or horrid, counter-intuitive mouse where you had to press down on the whole thing to click rather than it simply having buttons on top like any other 'normal' mouse.

antsbull
At uni we used PowerMacs for our courses - and *Marathon* was installed on all of them, so we played it *a lot* when we were meant to be coding for our projects! I now write software on Macs and use Steam to play everything from *Half-Life 2* to *Broken Sword* and *Wing Commander*.

Eric
Only in school on the old Macintoshes, as they were called back then. I played what the teachers called 'videogames' that were *The Manhole* and *Shuffle Puck Cafe*.

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Nick Bruty looks back at Probe's astonishing looking 8-bit run-and-gun

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WipEout 2097

■ Discover how Psygnosis created its stunning PlayStation sequel



Blue Lightning

■ We quiz the developer behind the Lynx's sensational *After Burner* clone



Sega Rally

■ We speak to key coders to find out why Sega's arcade racer has such a rich heritage



Mega Drive add-ons

■ We look at the Mega-CD and 32X and wonder if they were really that bad…


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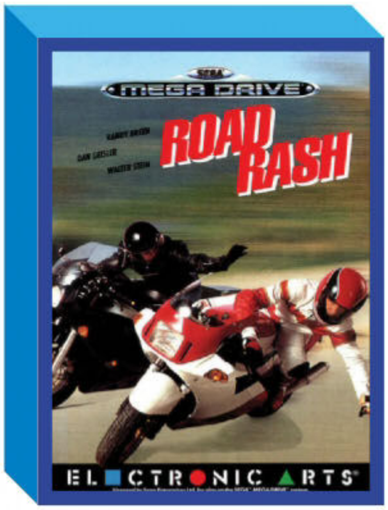

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ROAD RASH

» Electronic Arts' violent racer was an excellent game, but did you know that the original Road Rash also has a dark undertone that focuses on kidnapping? Well, we didn't either, but that's exactly what's revealed upon reaching the end of popular racing videogame. And you thought those many policemen you encounter were simply there to keep an eye on your speed…



01

» After narrowly avoiding incoming vehicles, determined police officers and rival bikers you finally reach the finish line. Exhausted you pull up alongside a rival racer, who reveals herself to be none other than the flame-haired Natasha.



02

» "She seems lovely," you say to yourself as Natasha stops her bike next to your own and gives you an incredibly sincere handshake. "I could certainly get used to this," you think as you gaze into her attractive eyes.



03

» "Congratulations," Natasha tells you, before leaning over to kiss you on the lips. "I can certainly get used to this," you tell yourself, not realising until too late that the only reason you're kissing is so she can distract you…



04

» Too late! The wily minx has used her charms to best you and quickly cold cuts you before you realise what's happening. Before you can react she slings you over her motorcycle and gives the thumbs up to an unseen collaborator. It would appear that you're the latest victim to fall for Natasha's made-up bike tournament.



05

» Natasha's masterplan works perfectly and she gives an evil laugh as she speeds off with you, leaving your valuable bike in the dirt. Despite a thorough investigation by the police – the same police you'd try to avoid while you were tearing across America – your body is never found.


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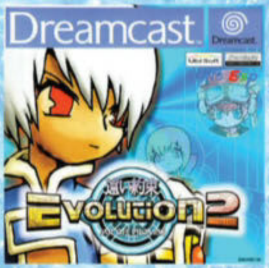
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